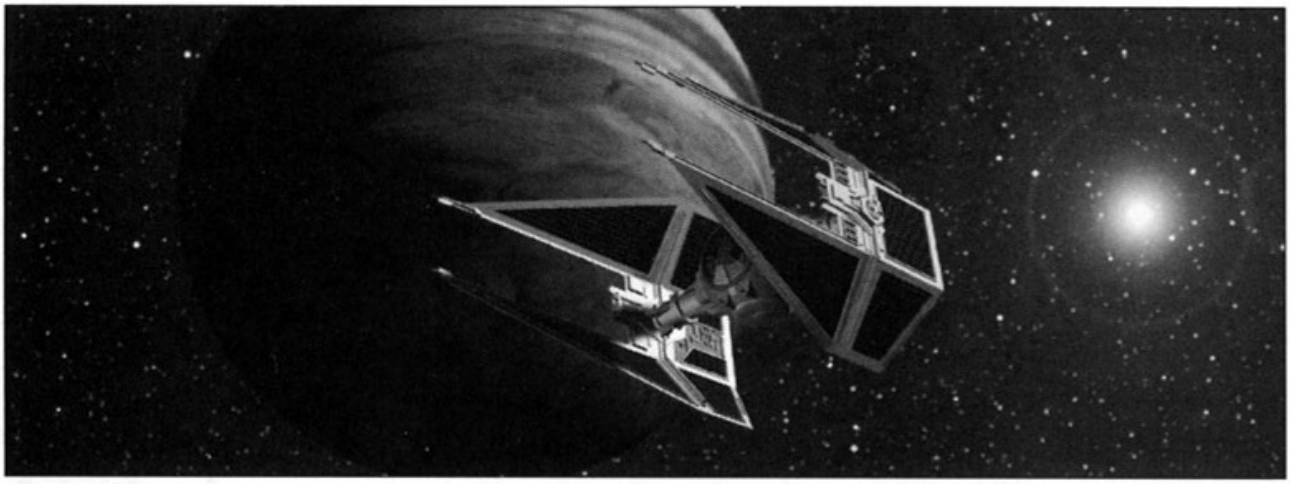

STAR
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The Stele Chronicles



STAR TIE FIGHTER WARS

The Stele Chronicles

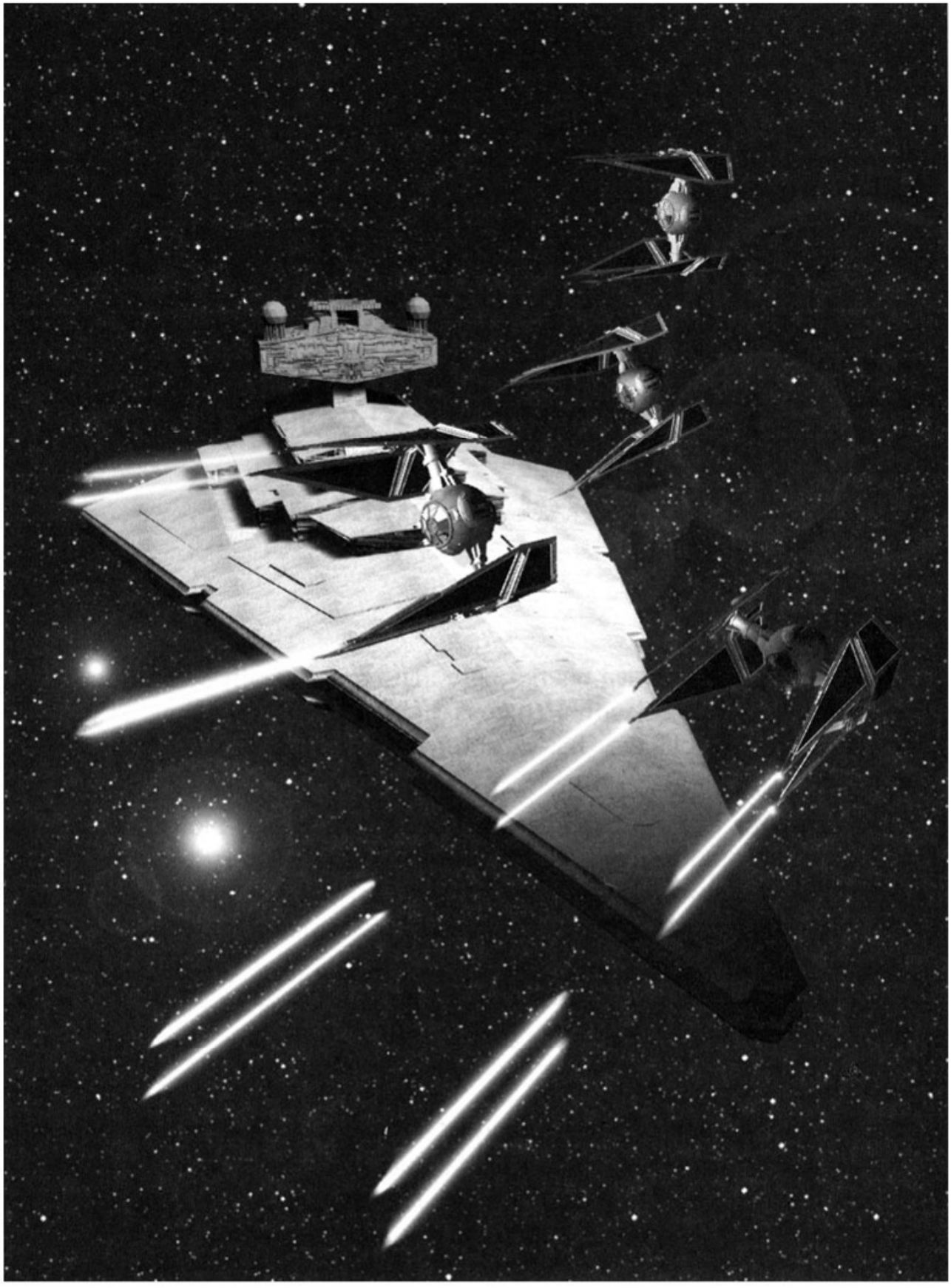
Prologue

. . . elsewhere, battles have been fought. The great Death Star — destroyed. The Rebel Alliance — with Princess Leia, Luke Skywalker, Han Solo, Chewbacca the Wookiee — has celebrated its first major victory against the Empire.

The Emperor and his chief vassal, Lord Darth Vader, plot to expand the Empire's power and to wipe out the Rebels. In the Hoth system, the Empire strikes back. Discovering the Rebels' base on the ice planet, the Empire attacks in force and the Rebels are forced to evacuate.

But the Galaxy is vast, and news sometimes travels slowly. Even slower are the winds of conquest which blow from the center of civilization to the outer edges of what is known as the Rim.

In the Taroon system, two small worlds engage in a decades-long conquest. Few people bother to recite the original causes of the war. It simply exists, ravaging the cities and the countryside. The economies of both Kuan and Bordal are in ruins, their people living under martial law. Systems like Taroon are ripe for conquest; ready to welcome the iron hand of the Empire . . .



The Stele Chronicles

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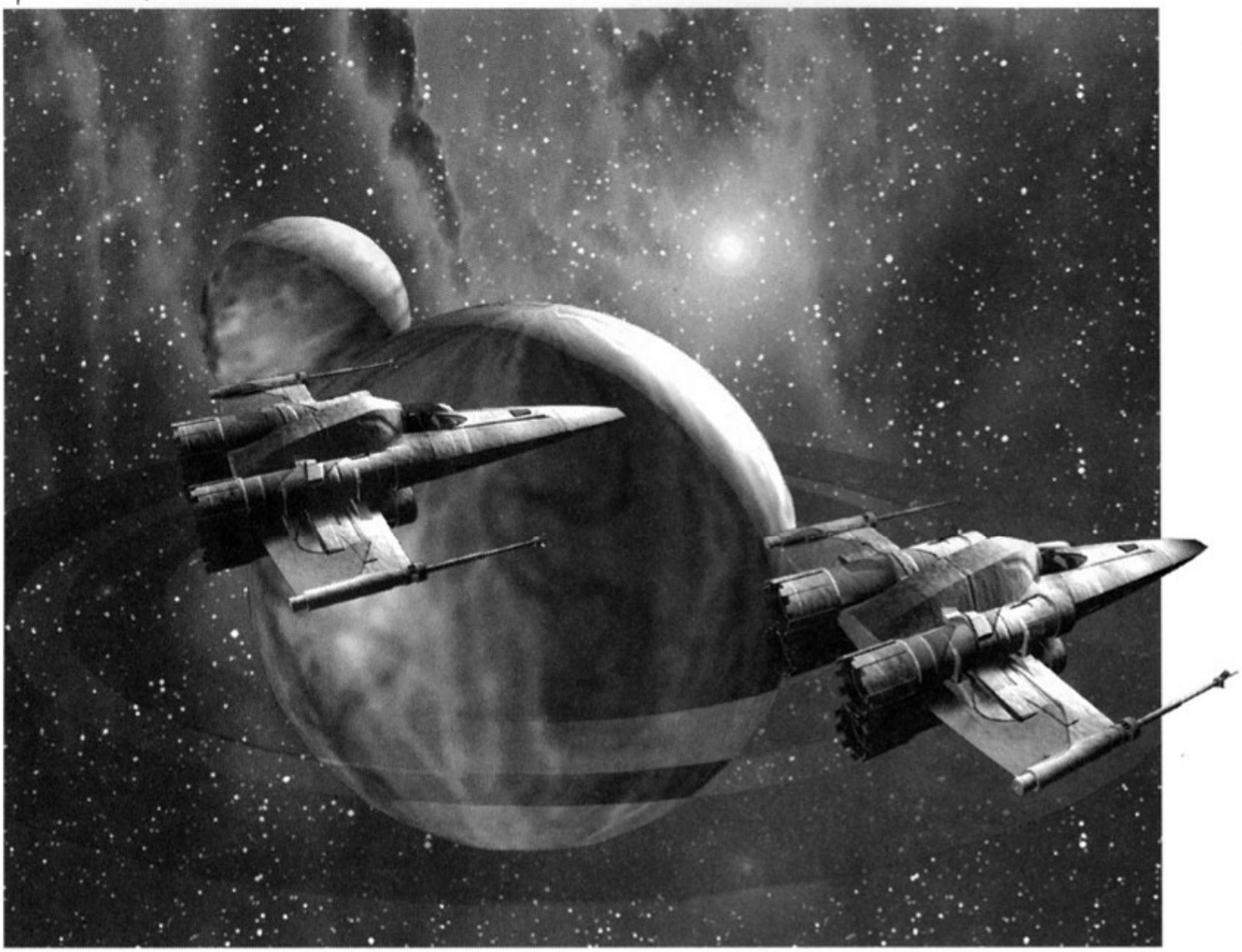
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The Stunt

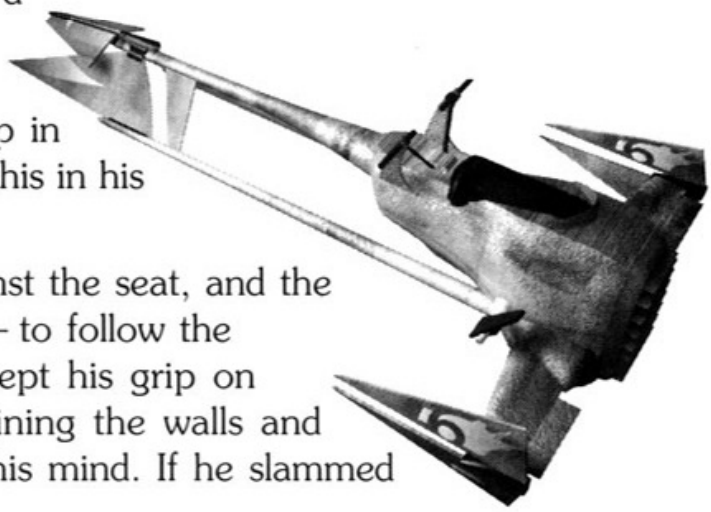
The swoop flew low over the ravaged landscape, hugging the shattered rooftops. Small tornadoes of dust and debris sprang up to mark its passage. The pilot did not notice the destruction, the rooftops, or the dust. He had seen it all before. His eyes were riveted ahead, his hands gripped the sticks, and his mouth clenched tight. The swoop flew toward an eerie landscape of high-rise buildings — once a great metropolitan center. Now, after nearly twenty years of interplanetary warfare, they were (mostly) empty shells. The swoop sped toward them.

At the last instant, the pilot twisted the sticks to the side and worked the pedal controls. The swoop twisted and turned, snaked its way through the maze of twisted girders and blown-out windows. A blaster shot rang out —

close — but the pilot continued his weaving course without hesitation. There were always snipers, but they only added to the excitement.

Up ahead, the pièce de résistance, the ultimate flythrough. The pilot's eyes narrowed, searching for the opening. There it was! The great doors, partially torn from their mountings, hung to the side like the wings of some tortured moth. Beyond, the cavernous interior — empty, dark, and dead.

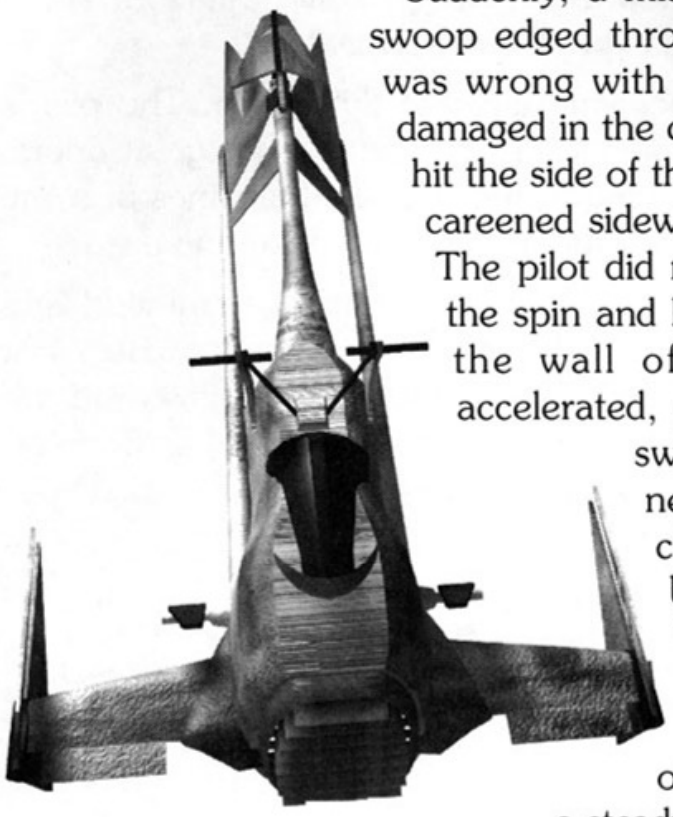
He angled downward, flattening his approach at the last minute, and blasted past the broken wings, through the great opening that only just accommodated the swoop . . . into the building. He hadn't counted on the sudden change of illumination — the darkness. Blinded, he kept the swoop on a steady course. He had less than two seconds before he'd have to maneuver again. One and . . . Too late. He'd have to begin his turn. He pulled hard against the counter force of the sticks, jerking his swoop in an impossible loop. He'd rehearsed this in his mind so many times. He could do it!



The G forces slammed him against the seat, and the sticks jerked and tried to pull free — to follow the path of least resistance — but he kept his grip on the swoop, willing it around, imagining the walls and ceiling — feeling their presence in his mind. If he slammed into one of them . . .

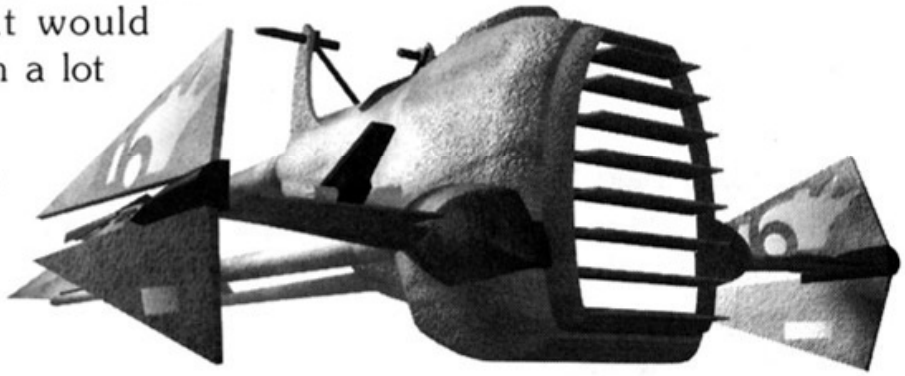
He could see again, but it hardly mattered now. The swoop was inverted and he hung on with his knees, not trusting the safety belt. The swoop hit the ceiling of the cavernous room — not too hard — then bounced slightly with a scraping sound that echoed over the engine roar. There were bright sparks that died quickly, and great chunks of ceiling that fell in slow motion toward the floor below.

The pilot held his breath and pushed forward on the sticks, then twisted hard to the side. The swoop steadied, twisted in the air, and was headed once again for the great doorway it had come through. He had done it! He had executed a near-perfect stunt. Far away, he knew, the collected voices of the audience would be gasping and yelling. He had only to make it through the doorway and he was home free.



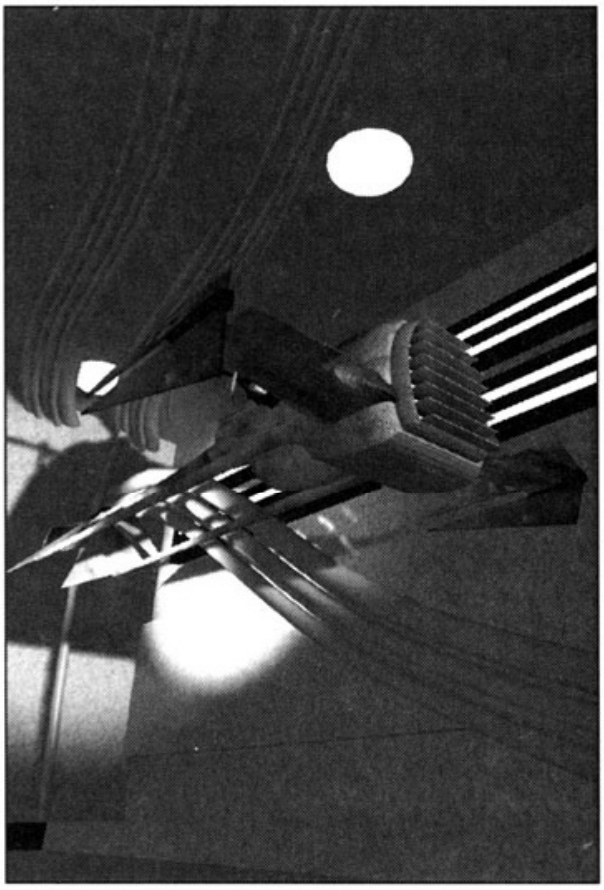
Suddenly, a miscalculation — very slight — as the swoop edged through the great opening. Something was wrong with the stabilizer nozzles — probably damaged in the collision with the ceiling. The swoop hit the side of the entrance with a sickening crunch, careened sideways a moment, then began to spin. The pilot did not panic. By instinct, he corrected the spin and let the swoop slide sideways toward the wall of a nearby building. Then he accelerated, poured emergency power into the swoop's oversized engines, turning near disaster into a showy direction change. The swoop shot out between the buildings again and back over the ravaged rooftops of the dead city. Nobody watching it fly would have guessed the extent of the damage it had suffered. It held a steady course.

As he approached the staging area for the swoop competition, the pilot saw the cycling lights ahead and knew they were being raided. The local authorities had better things to do, but they still cracked down on the illegal swoop rings at regular intervals. Instinct took over and he sent the swoop into a fast dive and turn, wondering if anyone had even witnessed his stunt. Or were they all running, dodging, escaping, or worse — being loaded into the hoverwagons and carted away to reclamation sites? And worst of all, he knew he would never collect his winnings. That stunt would certainly have pulled in a lot of cash.



He pulled the sticks hard and headed away, hugging the deck to avoid being spotted.

The Hangar



Back in the small hangar where he kept the swoop, Maarek Stele surveyed the damage. Without the winnings from the stunt competition, he would have a hard time making repairs. He could pound out and straighten the hull easily enough, but a few servos and some adjustors had been flattened, and replacing them from the black market would be costly.

There was a double knock on the hangar door. He recognized the cadence. It was a friend. Maarek walked to the door, stepping carefully over several half-finished assemblies, peered through the peephole to confirm that it wasn't a trap, and spied Pargo offering a rude gesture toward the peeper. Laughing, Maarek opened the door to let his friend inside.

Though only an inch or two taller than Maarek, Pargo must certainly have outweighed his friend by half again. Not fat. No. Just naturally big. And strong. Pargo could easily out-muscle anyone he met. Any human, anyway. He walked inside quickly and Maarek closed and latched the door behind him.

"So you got away," Maarek offered by way of greeting.

"Was out stunting, just like you," Pargo answered. Indeed, Pargo was still wearing long boots and coveralls — typical swoop gear.

Maarek scowled. "Waste of time," he said. "I would'a won easy. I was powered."

Pargo glanced at Maarek's swoop. "Yeah, maybe. But at least my swoop's still in one piece."

Maarek said nothing. Pargo was right.

Pargo pointed at the front of the swoop. "Hey! What's that?"

Maarek just shrugged.

Pargo fingered a small device bristling with wires and gleaming connectors. He grinned and said, "One of your strange gadgets, I bet."

"Just a modified gyro-servo sensor array I was testing."

Pargo laughed. "Well, there's nothing to gyro-servo now. Why don't you flash down to the Maze. I hear there's been some strangers nosing for info. We could maybe buzz on them. Have a little fun."

"Probably Bordali spies. To hell with them. To hell with all Bordal. For that matter, to hell with the whole war."

"These guys might know somethin'," suggested Pargo. "You know. About . . ." A fierce, almost feral look from Maarek made Pargo hesitate. "So you comin'?" he asked after a moment.

The look evaporated, became something akin to resignation. "Yeah," Maarek answered. "I'll meet you there. I gotta see my mom, bring her some stuff."

Pargo left then, after arranging to meet Maarek at the Maze in three hours. After a last careful survey of the damaged swoop, which had not miraculously repaired itself, Maarek showered, changed, secured the door and walked off into the night.

The Hidden Room

An hour later, Maarek was walking up a steep flight of stairs in a very lonely, very hidden part of the old city. Small creatures scuttled underfoot as he climbed and he could sense the eyes peering through small holes in the walls. He never much liked it here.

At the top of the stairs, he gave a complex knock — it was a code based on the date and some astrophysical calculations. Even someone who followed him and listened would not be able to duplicate that special knock.

The door opened instantly and Maarek walked inside.

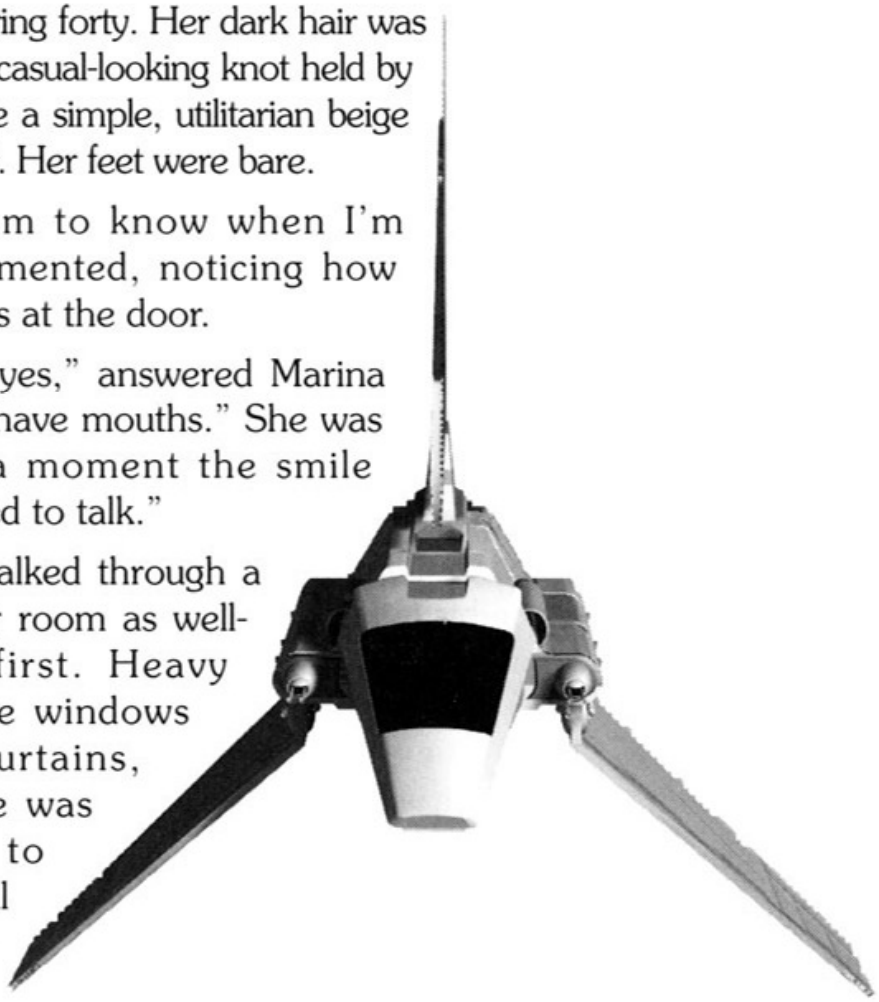
The contrast between the dark, half burned-out stairway and this room couldn't have been greater. The room was well lit, clean, and furnished with

fine furniture. On the walls, old tapestries shared space with scientific holos of stars of all kinds. Some of the holos were covered with scribbles and indecipherable writing.

Maarek's mother stood near the door. She was a beautiful woman nearing forty. Her dark hair was pulled up and tied in a casual-looking knot held by a large clasp. She wore a simple, utilitarian beige tunic belted at the waist. Her feet were bare.

"You always seem to know when I'm here." Maarek commented, noticing how quickly his mother was at the door.

"The walls have eyes," answered Marina Stele. "And the eyes have mouths." She was smiling, but after a moment the smile disappeared. "We need to talk."



She turned and walked through a doorway into another room as well-furnished as the first. Heavy curtains covered the windows and behind the curtains, Maarek knew, there was another covering to prevent any light at all from leaking out into the street. During the twenty-year war blackouts were standard on Kuan, but this room was sealed practically air tight.

"Sit down," she said.

Maarek sat. He chose a stiff, hard chair that seemed to fit the formality of his mother's tone of voice. He waited while she fixed some local tarine tea in the adjoining kitchen. She took her time, carefully scraping the leaves, arranging them according to custom in the cup, then adding the water. He watched through the open doorway. But he did not get up and join her, nor offer to help. He knew his mother wanted him to wait, to sweat it out.

"You're on the holos, you know," she said at last, placing his teacup on a small table to his right.

Maarek's eyes widened. "What do you mean?" he asked.

"That stunt you pulled. The raid was broadcast and your stunt was part of the coverage." She sat on a low chair facing him and began to blow on her tea.

"Fireballs! That's beam," he exclaimed, reverting to street talk. But Marina Stele only frowned.

"They had your name . . ." she began.

"So? I always use a . . . "

"Your real name," she interrupted.

Maarek said nothing, but he understood. His real name was all-too-well known, and both he and his mother were prime Bordali targets. It was one thing to be linked with illegal swoop gangs. That was a minor offense, and the local military authorities would do only a half-hearted job of pursuing a swoop criminal. But to be related to the famous scientist, Kerek Stele, was something else altogether. Ever since his father's abduction by Bordali agents, he and his mother had been keeping low, though truth to tell, Maarek took too many chances. But capturing Kerek's family would give the Bordali a powerful threat to hold over him. The Bordali would need something to make him cooperate. Ordinary methods would almost certainly not work.

They sat talking for some time. Maarek insisted that the publicity from the swoop episode would not cause them any problems. However, Marina disagreed and insisted it was time for both of them to move on, to find another place to hide. Maarek was just about to tell her she was too cautious for maybe the twentieth time, when there were several loud squeaks from the other room and Maarek's mother leapt to her feet. Too late. A blistering beam of energy hit the outside door just as Maarek followed his mother into the room to investigate. The door glowed for a second, the metal core began to melt, then the whole thing vaporized. Behind it, partially obscured among the fumes and smoke, was a man dressed all in black. In his hand, the heavy blaster glowed.

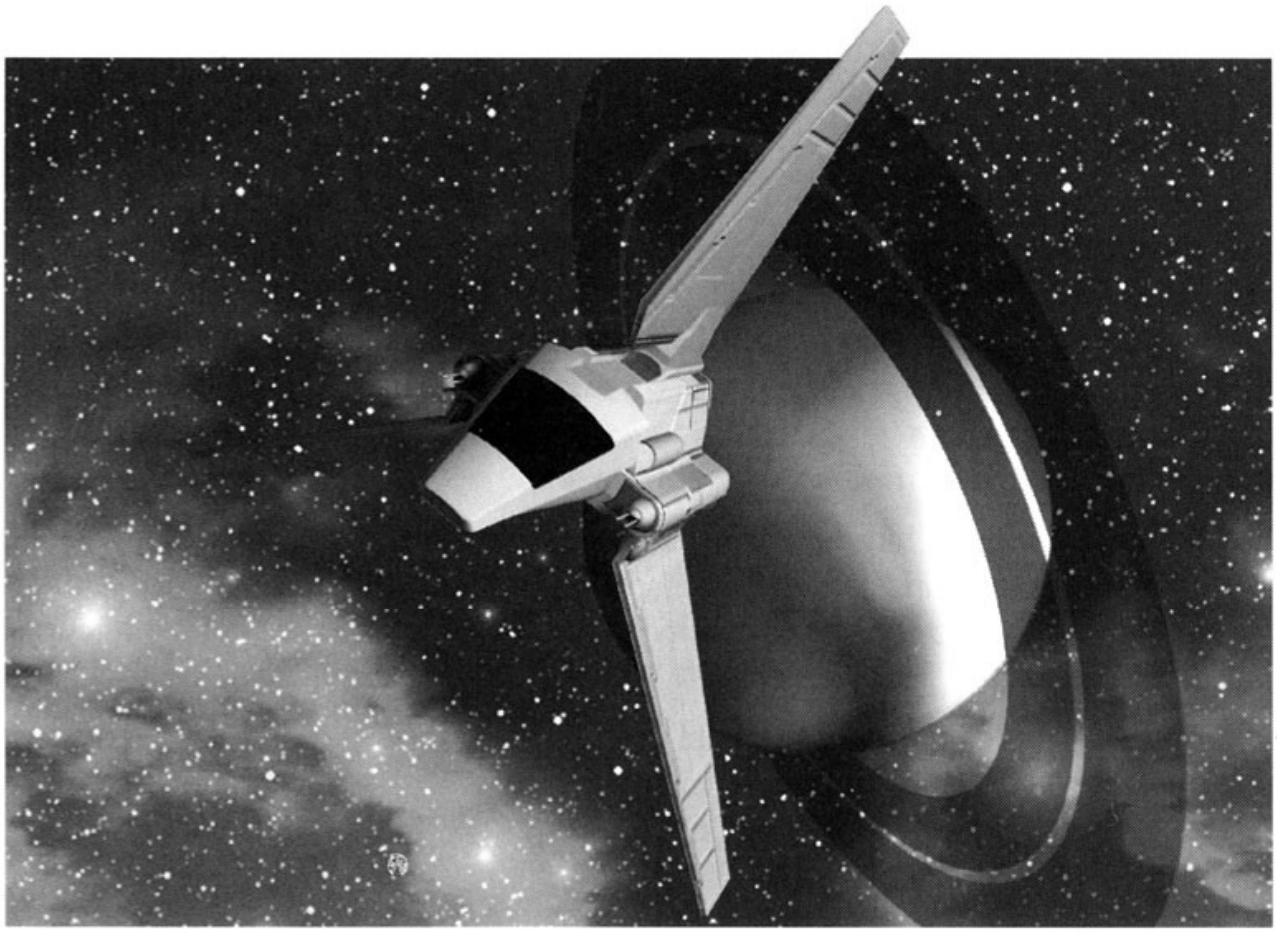
Quickly, before Maarek had even grasped the situation, Marina was shooting. From somewhere, she had obtained a small one- or two-shot blaster and already the man behind the door was falling backward. Maarek noticed that his mother's hair was loose around her shoulders.

"This way," Marina gasped, grabbing Maarek's arm and dragging him toward the back of the apartment. Maarek followed, feeling helpless and wishing he had a blaster, too.

His mother pulled him into a closet at the back of the building. It seemed a silly thing to do, but suddenly the floor of the closet gave way and they dropped quickly and for some time. When they landed Marina yelled, "Kick it!" and pointed to the wall. He could hear some commotion going on above them and it didn't seem the time to argue with his mother, so Maarek lifted his booted foot and pounded the wall with all his strength. A large section of the wall fell away and he could see the dark alley beyond. They ran.

The Bordali

A low, patchy fog blew through the damp streets, and the only light came from one or two of Kuan's moons. They listened a moment to the sounds of yelling back inside the building. Out on the street it was quiet and, without a word, Marina began running to the left, pulling Maarek along behind her.





Her bare feet made hardly a sound on the rough pavement, but Maarek's boots were not so silent and their slaps against the ground seemed each like small concussion missiles detonating in the alley.

Marina rounded the next corner. Maarek was a few strides behind, catching up quickly. He had no clear idea where she was heading and so just followed without thought, his senses casting about behind, fearing pursuit. And so he nearly crashed into her as he came around the corner. She was standing rock still, and he was just able to slow his charging gait before he knocked her down. Then he, too, stopped short. There were six of them, all with blasters drawn, all dressed in black.

The black shapes quickly fanned out around them. Marina threw her small blaster on the ground and held out her hands. Maarek shouldered in front of his mother and stood ready to take on the whole lot of them, but Marina whispered, "Give it up, son. If you fight them, they will kill you and take me anyway. They won't kill us if we give up. They want us alive."

"Listen to your mother, boy," one of their assailants said. Then he motioned with his blaster to the others and four of them darted forward. They placed restraints on Maarek's hands and a soundproof hood over his head. The world went dark and completely silent. His last clear image had been of his mother smiling his way, but looking rather sad in fact, as two black figures bound her hands.

He was seized, none too gently, and pushed forward. He stumbled at first, but soon grew used to the pace his captors set, one on each arm. After a few minutes they slowed, then stopped and waited for what seemed like hours but was probably no more than ten minutes. They led him up a ramp. He still couldn't see or hear, but he could feel the ridged walkway under his boots and something told him he was entering a ship.

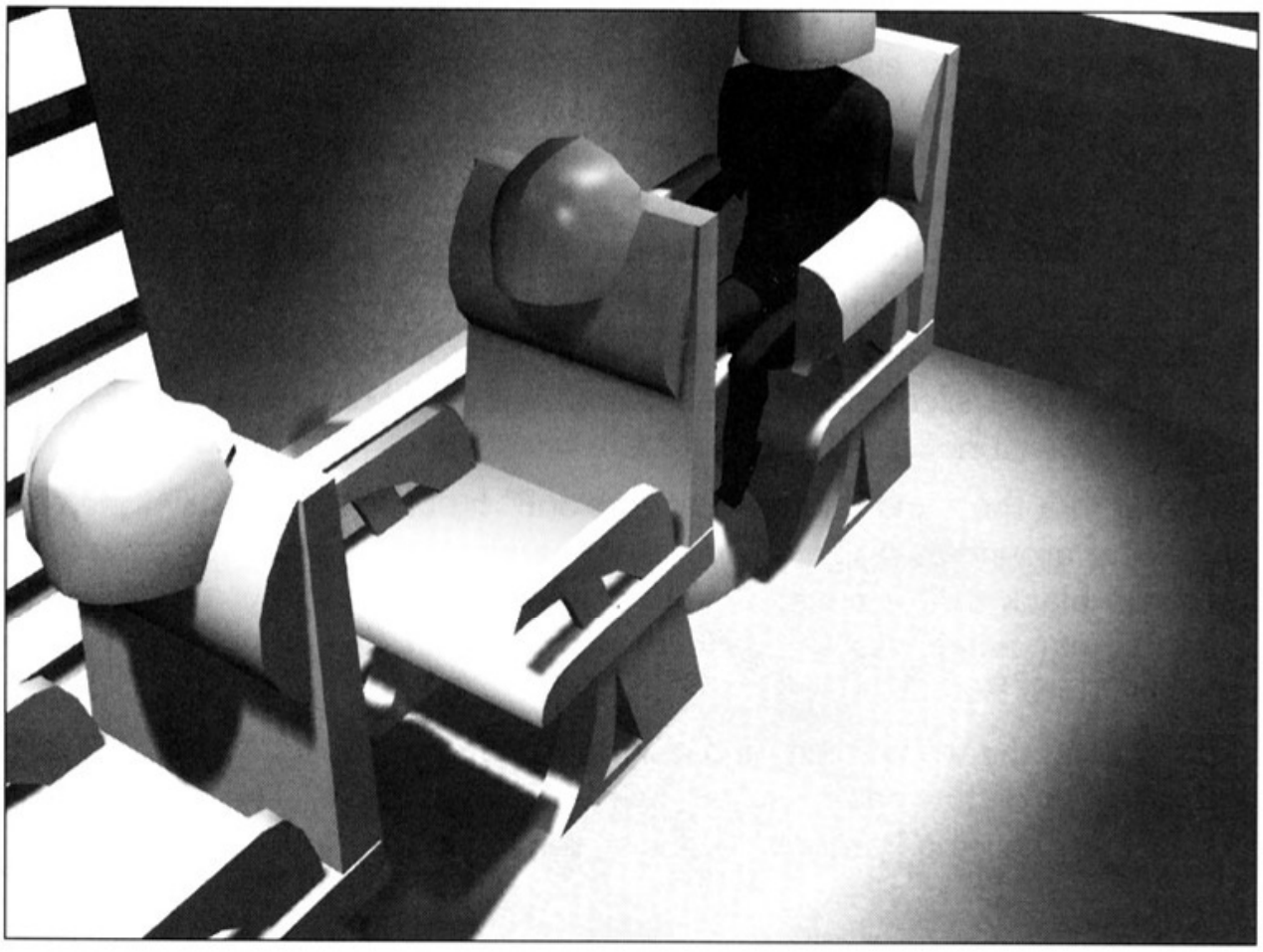
Someone strapped him into a seat. There was the familiar pull of gravity as the ship accelerated and left the ground. Maarek hungrily used his remaining senses to gain clues to the ship's direction, but the only clear sensation was up.

After a while, the sense of planetary gravity and acceleration was replaced by an even pull — clearly an artificial gravity field. That could only mean they had left Kuan altogether and were in space. He could feel the slight vibration of the ship's engines — they were still under power.

Someone removed his hood then, but not the restraints. He blinked in the sudden light, rubbing his eyes with his bound hands. As his vision cleared, he took in the scene around him. He was in a small cabin with no viewports. He could see a standard sliding hatch ahead of him. He couldn't see behind. The room was large enough to accommodate perhaps a dozen people, but there were only six seats. He guessed he was in some kind of shuttle craft.

His mother was strapped into one of the other seats across the room, her face set in a fierce expression. Two guards with blasters stood at the hatchway. They wore light green Bordali military uniforms. One man in a black uniform stood nearby. He spoke.

"I am Gwadj. I am an agent of the People of Bordal. I just want you to know that we have no particular use for either of you, other than to secure cooperation from your husband . . ." He nodded toward Marina. ". . . and your father." He looked directly into Maarek's eyes. "Please understand. We need only one of you for that purpose. If you cause us any trouble, we will kill one and keep the other."



Nobody said anything, so the man continued. He seemed to need to enjoy his triumph. Maarek wanted to throttle him and shove his grin down his esophagus.

"You may wonder how we located you," he began. "Of course it started with that foolish, but quite entertaining stunt you pulled, boy. Once we had identified you with the swoop gangs, our agents began asking a few discreet questions." The man stopped then and made a quick gesture at one of the guards who immediately ducked through the hatch.

"It's not a good idea for people in your position to have friends," the man went on. "In war, there are no friends." Gwadj turned toward the hatch, and, almost on cue, the guard returned, dragging someone behind him. Maarek gasped. It was Pargo! He looked awful and seemed barely conscious. The guard threw him roughly to the floor where he lay groaning softly. There were many small red marks on his face and arms.

"Your friend was very stubborn. We had a great deal of trouble restraining him, but we have many ways . . . Strength alone is so overrated. We took the fight out of him and he eventually led us to you." His look of self-satisfaction suddenly evaporated. "You should not have killed one of our officers," he said to Marina. "We have a longish ride ahead of us, and I will have time to enact some punishment for that. We do not allow our people to be killed without reprisals. I may not kill you, Madame Stele." Here, strangely, he stared directly into Maarek's eyes, "But you may wish I had."

There was a commotion behind Maarek, the sound of voices arguing. Maarek wanted to look around to see what was going on, but he and Gwadj were locked in a silent staring battle, and neither would give it up. Finally, Gwadj could wait no longer.

"What in a thousand galaxies is going on?" he cried. Maarek swiveled his head as far around as he could and caught a glimpse of a woman dressed in the same black uniform as Gwadj. She was talking softly, and Maarek couldn't hear what was said. He did notice that the woman was quite attractive, for a Bordali, that is.

Gwadj and the woman left, and only one guard remained. Maarek listened to the sound of the hatch closing with a soft whoosh. The guard stood uncomfortably eyeing Pargo, who still lay semiconscious on the deck.

"Let's get you into some restraints," the guard muttered and began to drag Pargo by one arm toward one of the banks of seats. Maarek could see the man's eyes clearly from where he sat. He was intent on what he was doing, clearly a little nervous at being left alone with the prisoners. He held a blaster in one hand, dragging Pargo's limp form across the metal deck with the other. A moment later he faltered, as if he had had a sudden thought, or so it seemed to Maarek. But immediately the man winced, his eyes grew wide, and he cried out. It was too late. A great hand had closed over his — the one with the blaster — and turned the gun toward the guard's chest. Pargo was awake!

There was a short, silent struggle, but Pargo was immensely strong — far stronger than the guard — and within moments had forced the guard to his knees. The blaster remained pointed directly at the guard's chest, and as Maarek watched, the man completely lost his will to resist, knowing that to do so would lead to his death.

So, instead of Pargo, it was the Bordali guard who found himself restrained.

"Don't make any noise," Pargo said quietly as he snapped the restraints on the man's hands, and the guard nodded his assent.

"There's a hood over behind those seats," volunteered Maarek. "That'll keep him quiet for sure."

Pargo glanced over at the discarded hoods, then back at the guard. The man looked terrified. "I don't think so. He won't give me any trouble."

"Then get me out of this seat," said Maarek. "We've got to find a way out of this mess."

"Don't get your hopes up," said Marina. "They've got all the advantages."

"We have this," said Pargo, holding the blaster up.

"One against many," was Marina's reply as Pargo set about freeing her and Maarek from the restraints.

Despite appearances, Maarek could see that his friend was struggling to maintain his balance and bravado. Whatever the Bordali trash had done to him, Pargo had not yet fully recovered.

A few minutes later they were standing together facing the forward hatch wondering what to do, when the ship lurched as if it had hit something.

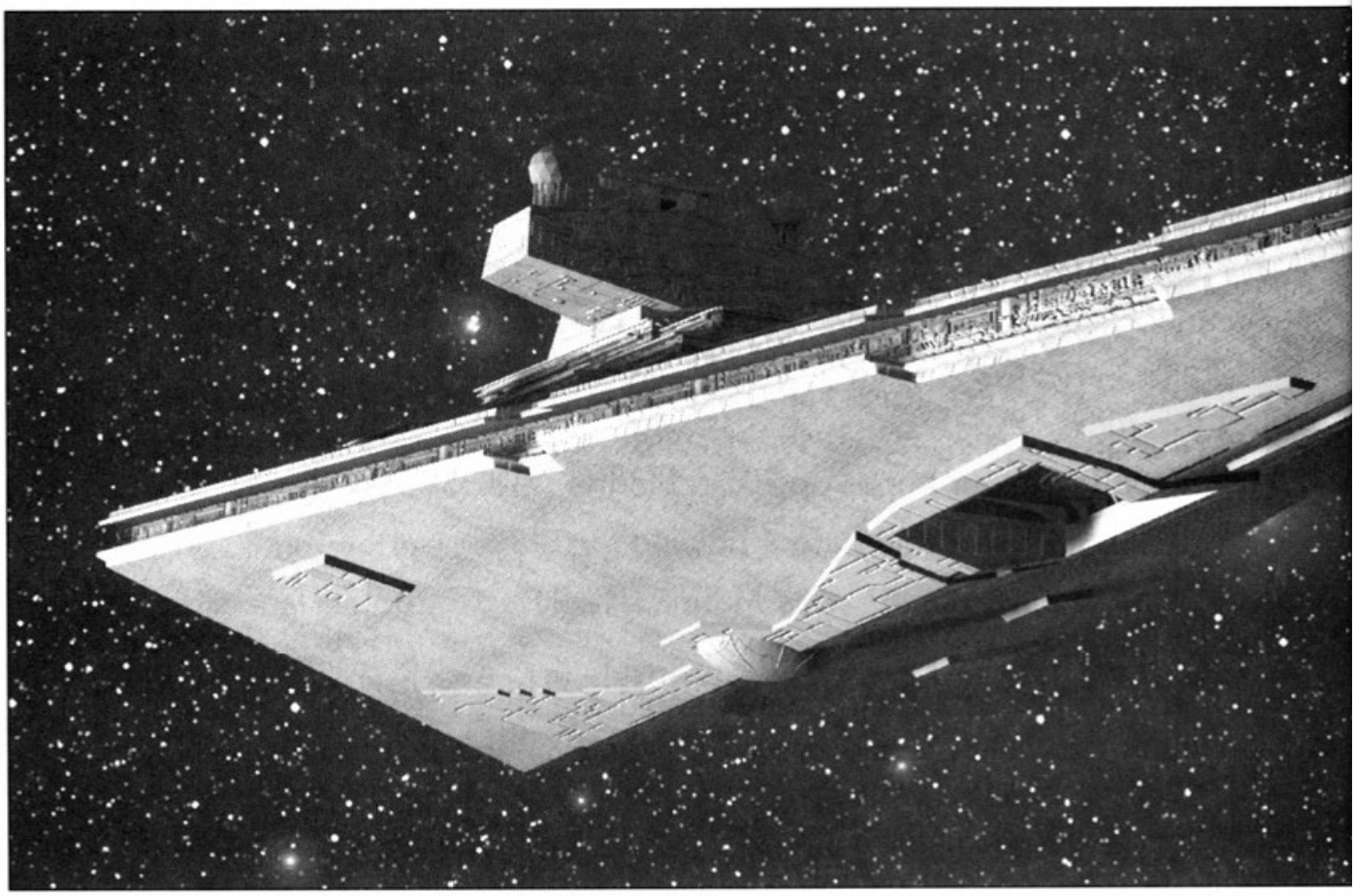
Almost immediately, Gwadj stormed through the hatch, followed closely by the woman in black and another guard. They all carried drawn weapons.

Whatever else he was, Gwadj was quick. He immediately sized up the situation, taking in the guard in his restraints and the blaster in Pargo's hand. He also knew that he had the upper hand.

"Hold your fire. The situation is about to change very quickly now," he said. "There's an Imperial Star Destroyer off our bow and we've been caught in a tractor beam. I'm afraid we are no longer masters of our own destiny." He spoke quietly, in a voice laden with resignation.

"So what are you planning to do?" asked Marina in a voice equally resigned.

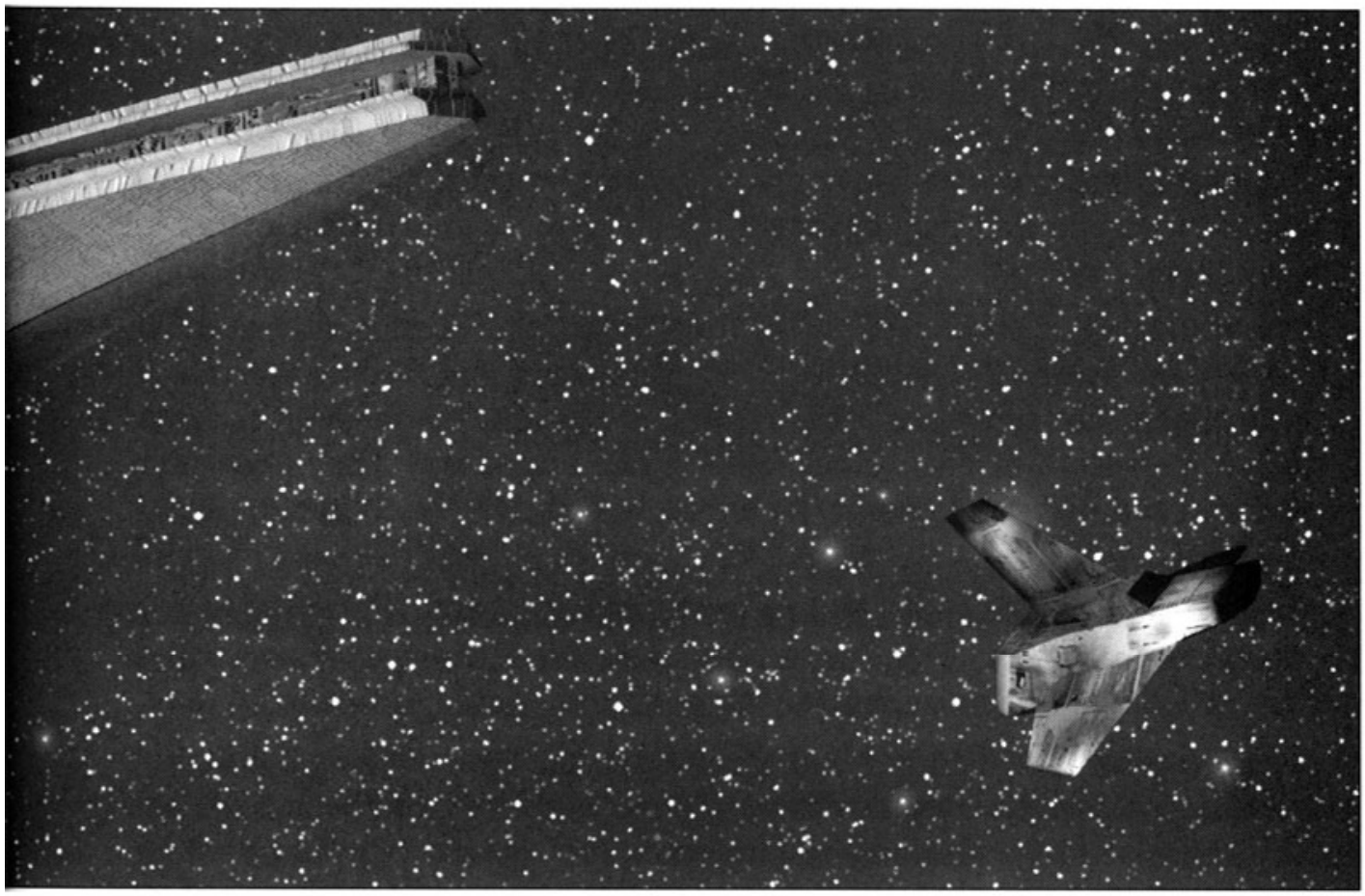
Gwadj laughed. A bitter sound. "What am I to do, my lady? I was going to kill you all out of spite, but now . . . It has been a long war."



"Yes it has," Marina answered. Then, on Gwadj's signal, the three Bordali laid down their blasters. Marina nodded at Pargo who, very reluctantly, followed suit. Then they waited.



When the Imperial stormtroopers arrived, anonymous in their white armor, they came quickly, efficiently, through the shuttle's hatch and took up positions with blasters drawn. One of them spoke. His voice was tinny and distant.



"Come this way," was all he said, then the stormtroopers closed ranks around the former enemies. In some way, Maarek knew that the war between the Bordali and the Kuan, or at least his personal war, was over. He followed the stormtroopers into a waiting assault shuttle and from there to the Star Destroyer *Vengeance*. There his life began.

The Vengeance

They stood in rows stretching off into the distance like great metallic insects on parade. After three months, Maarek had still not assimilated the vastness of the Star Destroyer, and the sight of all the TIE fighters, bombers, and interceptors in the cavernous hangar still had the capacity to overwhelm, and to inspire. And then there were the walkers . . .

He thought often of the irony of his present situation. There they had been, lifelong enemies. Now all that was history. In one moment of destiny, he was made to feel insignificant, and all the causes for which he had stood, likewise.

He was afraid. He knew of the Empire, of course — everyone did — but more by reputation and rumor than by contact or experience. The reputation that preceded the Imperials was one of efficient brutality. He saw absolutely no hope of escape and fully expected his life to be a short one. In that he was mistaken, however.

When the assault shuttle had taken them to the Star Destroyer, he did not see it — there were no viewports in the small brig where they were held. Stormtroopers watched over them all, and the recent combatants could do no more than stare at each other looking dull and spent. They knew they had arrived at a new location only by the slight bump as the shuttle docked.

They were led at blaster point into a long hallway. They saw little and did not know where they were — if they were on a faraway world or a ship, or an outpost somewhere. They were separated and Maarek was placed in a cell and left alone. Food was provided after a time. Mostly, he waited.

Time passed slowly for Maarek and he kept wondering what had happened to his mother and to Pargo. Then an officer came to his cell and spoke with him for a while. He told Maarek that the Empire had declared martial law in his solar system and that all worlds now served the Emperor.

"There is peace now among your planets. No more senseless death and destruction," he said. "What do you think about that?"

Maarek didn't know what he thought. The war was all he had ever known, and yet he hated it bitterly. It had destroyed his world, taken his father, and done nobody any good. He knew both his parents had been against it, and he had been raised to share that view. So he answered, "I think it's a good idea." That seemed a pretty safe answer, considering where he was.

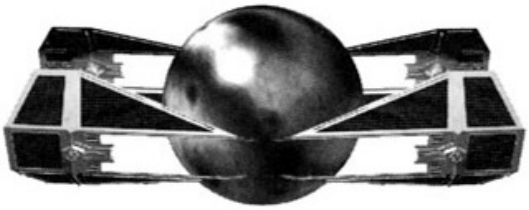
The officer nodded. He noted something in a datapad, then asked, "Do you have any skills we would find useful?"

"I might. But I want to know about my mother before I answer any more questions."

The man made another note. Then he waited. Maarek waited, too. Finally the officer shrugged his shoulders. "Your mother is fine. You'll see her soon. Now can you answer my question?"

Maarek realized he had won a minor, if inconsequential, victory. "I am a pretty fair swoop pilot and mechanic. I also have a fair acquaintance with general science and astrophysics," he answered truthfully. "I used to throw a mean hoverball," he added, though he figured it was useless information.

The man made more notes, then stood and said, "Thank you." He left.



The next day another officer arrived with a small escort of shipboard troopers. He introduced himself as Lieutenant P'arghat and asked Maarek to follow him. Happy to leave the confines of his cell, and hoping he wasn't going to be shot or otherwise mistreated, he followed.

The man led him to smallish amphitheatre that contained perhaps 150 seats arranged before a small raised platform. A few civilians occupied some of the seats, and guards were arranged at intervals against the walls. The civilians were dressed in the same outfit Maarek was wearing — white pajama-like pants and shirts with the Imperial logo emblazoned here and



there on the fabric and a large, very readable number on the back of the shirt. Prisoner's clothes.

Maarek was shown to a seat and told to stay put. He watched as others arrived and soon recognized several people — Pargo came in, then his mother, the Bordali woman from the shuttle, and he thought he recognized another of the Bordali soldiers. He did not see Gwadj. He recognized public figures from both Kuan and Bordal. Of course most of the people were total strangers, but many had the look of battle-hardened soldiers. Both his mother and Pargo smiled when they spotted him, but there was an obvious tension about their faces which Maarek was sure his echoed. This was no time or place for rejoicing or happy reunions. Who knew what these Imperial conquerors were up to?

After a time the amphitheatre was filled. Then a man in a formal Imperial uniform approached the raised platform and began to speak. His voice was amplified, though Maarek guessed that his natural voice was quiet.

"Beings of Taroon. I am Admiral Mordon, your host aboard this ship. I have invited you here to introduce you to the Empire and to help you understand what our purpose is and what your roles may be. You have been

chosen from among your people for a variety of reasons. Some of you will return to your home planets and serve the Emperor. Others may, if they qualify, join the Imperial fleet and help us bring order and peace to the galaxy. For now, please listen and learn. Later, you will have an opportunity to ask questions."

The Origin of the Empire

"Do you know why your system has been at war for twenty years?" Mordon began. "Do you know why you have suffered for so long without real leadership, strong economies, and a valued position within the galaxy? Your problems started many years ago, with the Republic.

"Long ago, when the Clone Wars ended, the galaxy was divided up by a group of beings who called themselves senators. These senators formed a government designed to make them more powerful and rich. They were the elite, and all other beings were their unwitting accomplices in the systematic pillage of a thousand thousand worlds.

"Of course, the senators made it sound as if they were going to govern fairly, represent their systems, and bring peace and harmony to the galaxy. As you are well aware, they did no such thing. When was the last time Taroon received any aid, commerce, or direction from the so-called Republic?"

The man hesitated at that moment and there was a low murmur in the crowd. His words had produced the desired effect. People were grumbling about the Republic, which had never in recent memory paid any attention to the Taroon system.

"The corruption of the senators gradually came to light, in large part due to the efforts of one of their members — a strong-willed, but uncompromising senator named Palpatine. Senator Palpatine worked diligently to expose the corruption and rot, the rampant opportunism that was bleeding the lifeblood of the galaxy. He was one of the few idealists who believed in the rhetoric of the Republic and who had worked his way to his position through years of service to his fellow beings.

"Soon, he learned that to expose corruption was both dangerous and ineffective. His enemies were too well-entrenched, so he took a different approach. He worked within the system, gradually making allies of many key

members of the senate, the Republican Guard, and even those Jedi Knights who remained uncorrupted.



"His great vision was to bring unity and equity to all the worlds, but he quickly saw the weakness of the Republican system. A perceptive student of history, he knew that the greatest strength comes with centralized, individual leadership, backed by a powerful military. This was the vision that he followed, and such was the strength and perseverance of his effort that he was able to form a powerful coalition of leaders who eventually named him Emperor. The era of peace and prosperity had begun.

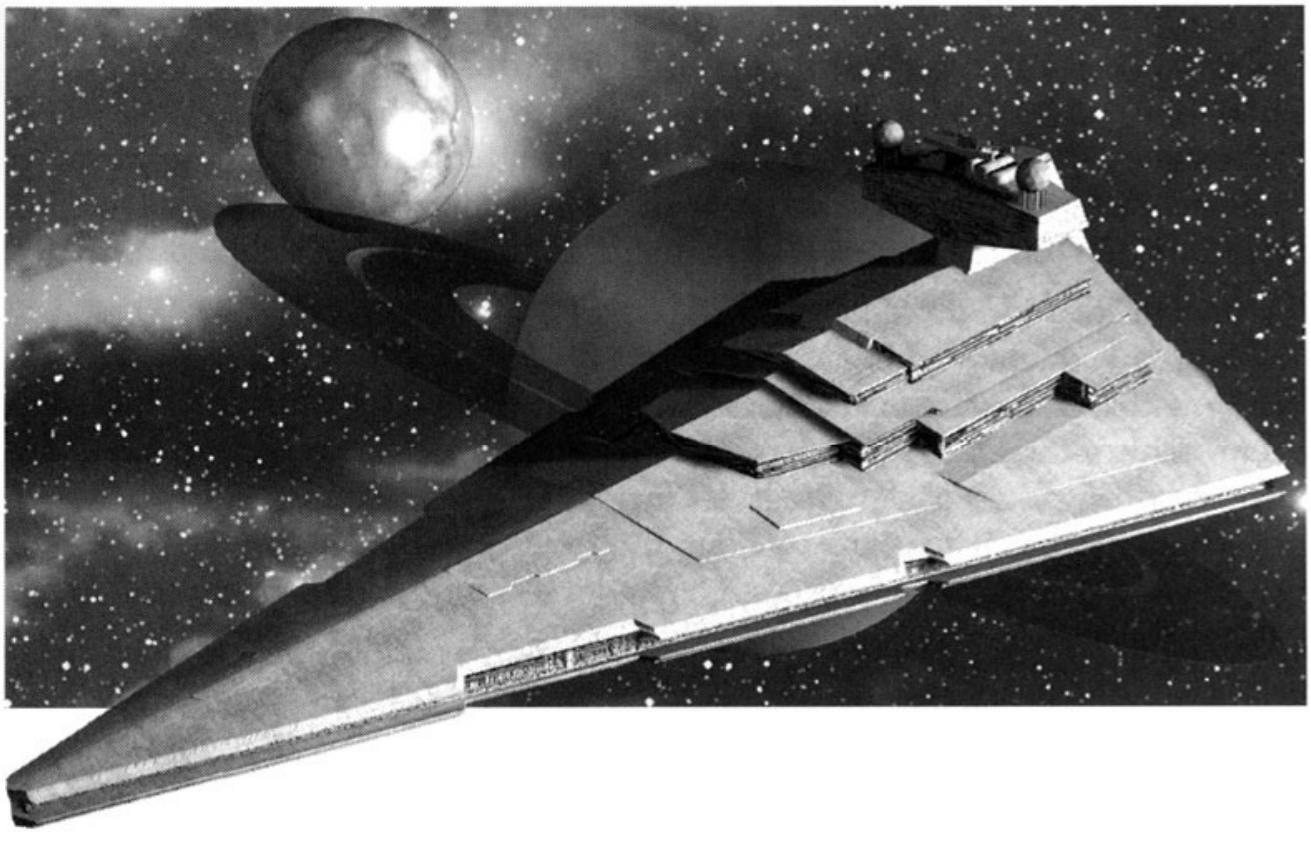
"However, out in the Rim, among the outer planets, events of such importance might not have produced any benefit, due to the long neglect of the Republic. It is our mission to bring that unity to the Empire. We carry the force to do so if necessary, but our mission is diplomatic. We will install our sector governors and local authorities, bring order to your worlds, and make them productive members of the Empire.

"Today the worlds of the galactic Core enjoy prosperity, security, and tremendous growth. With a strong central government, each planet, each system, and each sector contributes its part. The hardy settlers of the Cardua system excel at mining the rich ore deposits of their asteroid belts. Their neighbors in the Xorth system enjoy rich soil and trade largely in agricultural goods. They also provide the finest Farrberries in the galaxy — prized for their fine scent and invigorating effect. Each benefits from the efforts of the others. Taroon also has a role to play, and we are here to give you the opportunity to join the greatest empire of all time.

"There are dangers, even to this great Empire — to you and to all of us. The Emperor wants you to know who our common enemies are. First, there is the problem of rogue alien races who cannot, or will not live in peaceful coexistence and commerce with the human race, or who have designs of conquest themselves — races like the Mon Calamarians and the Wookiee. You can join us in thwarting their destructive efforts.

"There are also some who wish to resurrect the old corruption. Led by former senators who want to return to their corrupt ways, these rebels have dared to interfere with our attempts to bring peace to the galaxy. Make no mistake. They are led by desperate and persuasive criminals, and they have made unholy alliances with some of the very alien races who desire our destruction. We welcome qualified volunteers in the fight against these evil beings and their lies."

The admiral stopped speaking and looked over the assemblage. Maarek felt his eyes sweep over and, very briefly, lock onto his. Or so it seemed. The moment was very fleeting, but it somehow made Maarek feel noticed — and very uneasy. Then the man continued his speech. He spoke as if he were welcoming them to a hotel or resort. As if he were speaking to paying customers or invited guests. Maarek supposed some of the audience might actually have been invited, but many were dressed, like him, in prisoner's clothes.





"You are on one of many great ships of the Emperor's fleet," said Mordon. "This is the Imperial Star Destroyer *Vengeance*. Nearby are several other Star Destroyers and a few frigates. We are here to assure you and your neighbors peace, order, and prosperous commerce.

"Many of you have never seen a Star Destroyer before. I will now acquaint you with this marvelous instrument of peace and order."

Then the lights dimmed and a holo projection appeared near the man. It showed a great ship, dagger-shaped and ending in a raised wall topped by two cylindrical projections. Though it looked quite complex, there was no scale by which to judge it, and Maarek looked on with mild interest.

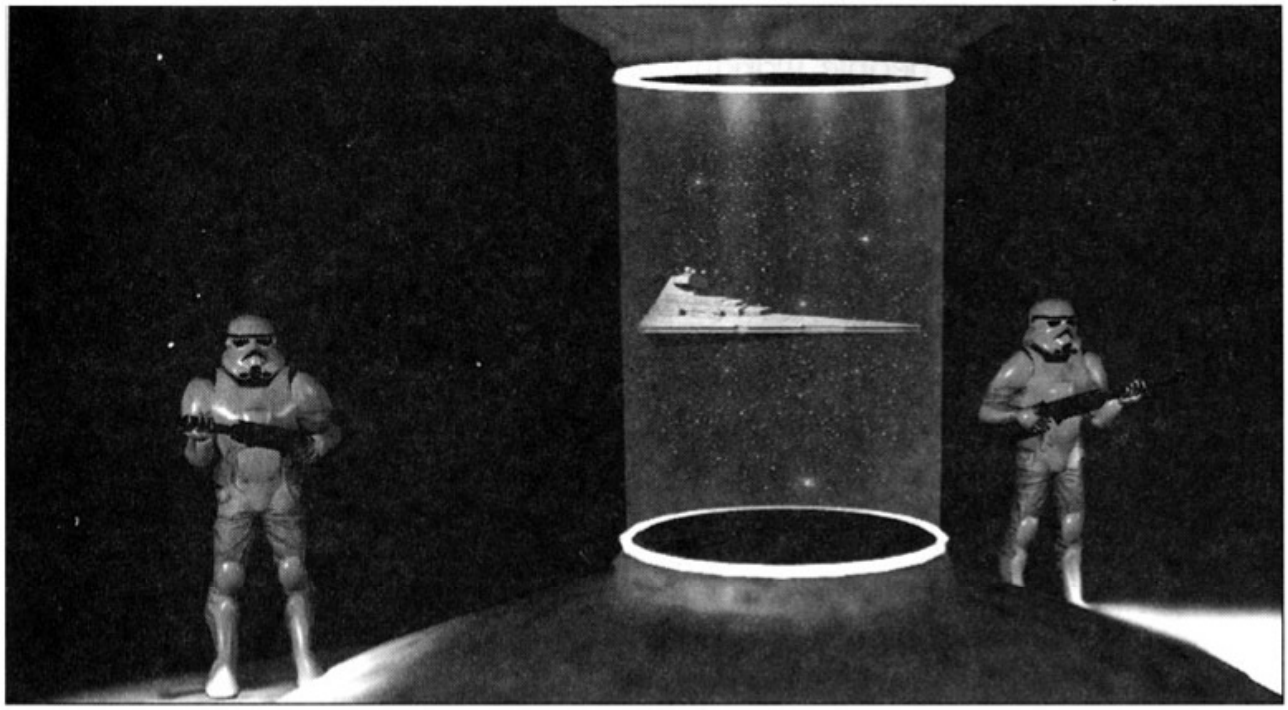
"This is an *Imperial*-class Star Destroyer," the man announced with obvious pride. "It is an impressive bit of engineering. By way of comparison, I'll show you what a standard interplanetary shuttle craft would look like in scale."

A small shuttle appeared, much like the one the Bordali had used to transport Maarek and his mother. It was merely a speck. Maarek felt his heart skip. He was inclined to suspect some trickery, but the man went on, as if reading his mind.

"This is no exaggeration, beings of Taroon. This is accurate. Very few if any of you have ever seen anything like it. You are now located on Deck 50 in the mid octal of the ship.

"A Star Destroyer contains many thousands of soldiers and crewmembers. It is, essentially, a city in space — or a fortress. Each Star Destroyer carries dozens of heavy turbolasers and ion cannons and a variety of other offensive and defensive armaments. In addition, each carries several squadrons of TIE fighters and TIE bombers as well as peace-keeping groups of AT-AT and AT-ST walkers and various other surface vehicles."

Then it suddenly hit Maarek like a 10-*g* deceleration. This wasn't a recruitment lecture, as he had thought at first. This was a thinly disguised threat. This Star Destroyer carried enough destructive power to level a relatively small planet like Kuan. If the Empire actually had more than one of these behemoths, it was no wonder they were able so easily to declare themselves masters of a whole system. And that's why so many leaders from both Kuan and Bordal were here. This "invitation" being extended to the worlds of Taroon was offered with a blaster to their heads. They cooperated. Or else.



But what was Maarek doing here? What did they want from him?

Meanwhile, the admiral made a signal to someone and a holo presentation began. It was a sort of guided tour of the Star Destroyer, making it look more than anything like some well-armed military hotel. Music accompanied the presentation, and fitted itself well to the mood of the images being displayed.

"The *Imperial*-class Star Destroyer is home to tens of thousands of space-borne troopers and crew. Here, in the civilian area, you see many beings going about their business. There are shops, services, eating establishments, and leisure centers."

As the narrator spoke, the holo showed something that might have been a street in a prosperous city, except that everything was on a somewhat smaller scale. The projection angles had been chosen well to give the impression of a lot of space, but Maarek saw that the whole scene showed a fairly small area — at least by planetary standards. Then the scene shifted.

The holo showed several images in quick succession. First, there was a small suite, spotless and new looking. There was a bedroom, living area with communications nook, and a small toilet room. There was no kitchen or apparent eating location. The narration that accompanied the images said this was the typical quarters for the crew. It looked inviting, almost cozy.

The music became more heroic and the holo shifted to an area loaded with equipment and people working. The narrator identified it as a control room, "one of many aboard the Star Destroyer." There was a bustle of beings, mostly human, running back and forth from one console to another, looking exceedingly busy and efficient. "The Star Destroyer is run by a dedicated crew of skilled technicians. They control the many functions of the ship including propulsion and navigation parameter input, life support monitoring, shield management, and weapon charging. There are several specialized control rooms as well. For instance, each bank of the Star Destroyer's turbolasers has a separate downstream control area, and there are terminal allocation stations for each hangar to handle and route all traffic to and from the ship."

The scene dissolved to show a large room dominated by a raised balcony. The scene depicted a large holomap. Again, there were various soldiers and crew busy at work on various mysterious machines.

"Tactical operations are handled from the central planning bridge. Here, the commander and his crew can maintain constant awareness of ongoing operations."

The holo presentation continued, showing some of the other sights of the Star Destroyer, including a quick look at one of the huge turbolasers. Finally, the image faded, the music went silent, and there was a moment of utter stillness within the amphitheatre. Then, slowly, the image of a man appeared in the holosphere. He was dressed in a long robe and hood, and Maarek felt a resonance within him. Here was a great man of ascetic values and deep thoughts. The man's face was shrouded beneath an oversized hood, so only parts of him could be seen.

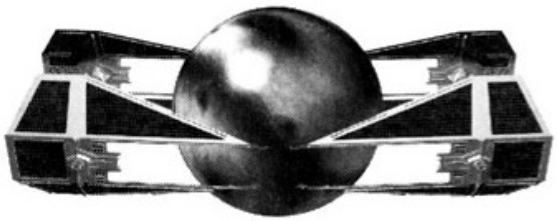


There was something about him that drew you to him. The man spoke. His voice was soft, yet it pierced the senses.

"I am . . . the Emperor," the man said. He said it simply, with no pretense, but with just a little hesitation to make the idea sink in. This really was the Emperor!

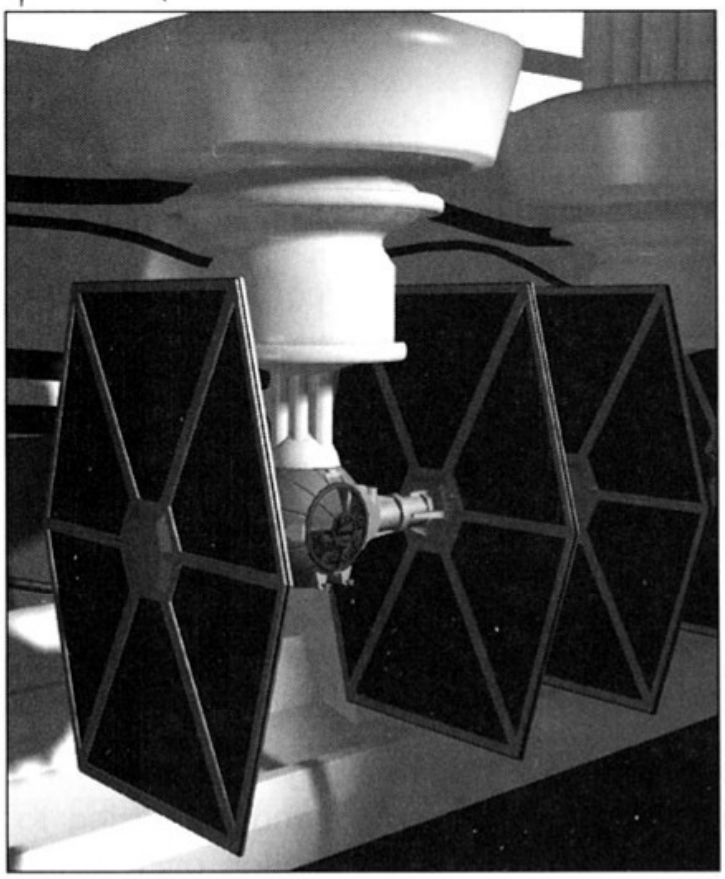
"Maarek — *he called Maarek by name, he could swear it* — you have been called upon to join us, to join for the good of all beings." It was terrifying. In front of all these people, how could he be addressing Maarek? Or was it some trick of the mind? Already, Maarek was unsure whether he had heard correctly or not. But the hooded being was speaking still, and his voice and inflection rose slowly as he did. "Those who oppose us must be destroyed. Those who would corrupt others, enslave them, and steal what belongs to us all must be stopped. It is time for strength. It is time to remove the last obstacles to peace, prosperity, and real power, such as has not been seen in the galaxy since the days of legend."

Maarek felt each word the man spoke, as if it were a physical entity. The Emperor spoke for some time, denouncing his enemies and promising to eliminate them. He spoke of loyalty and of peaceful domination over all the worlds. And by the time he had finished speaking, Maarek was ready to do anything, go anywhere, to serve him. The Emperor was the only hope for unity and strength. Unity and strength. It became Maarek's motto.



That was three months ago. Now Maarek worked as a mechanic in one of the main hangars aboard the Star Destroyer, surrounded by rows of vehicles ranging from TIE fighters to Imperial walkers. He was lasing a new heat panel onto the side of a TIE interceptor that had come in for repairs.

They had left Taroon behind and were light years away by now. Marina had stayed on Kuan to try to help in the transition of power and to look for her husband. Both Maarek and Pargo had joined up, seduced by the excitement and the power of the Empire. Also, though he couldn't explain it,



Maarek had a strong feeling that his father was no longer in Taroon and hoped to find him somewhere in the vastness of the galaxy.

This hangar was a repair and construction facility, and all the vehicles here were either under construction or were damaged and in need of repair. Great burn marks, slashes, and twisted metal confirmed the fact that not all systems were as easily assimilated as Taroon had been. The *Vengeance* was constantly on the move, making hyperspace jumps from one hot spot to the next.

Though Maarek had no reason to know about the military missions of the Star Destroyer, there were always rumors and stories filtering down even to his level, and he knew the *Vengeance* was involved in several actions simultaneously. They would jump into an area of conflict, launch TIE fighters or landing craft, then jump to another area to launch additional ships or to provide support to ongoing operations. Each time they jumped, he could feel a slight displacement or blurring of vision, but it quickly passed.

In the past few hours, the *Vengeance* had made several jumps. Then, perhaps an hour ago, several damaged fighter craft had been brought into the hangar. Maarek and the other mechs were working hard to bring them back into service. Earlier there had been several muffled thumps and someone told Maarek it might have been heavy torpedoes hitting the Star Destroyer's shields.

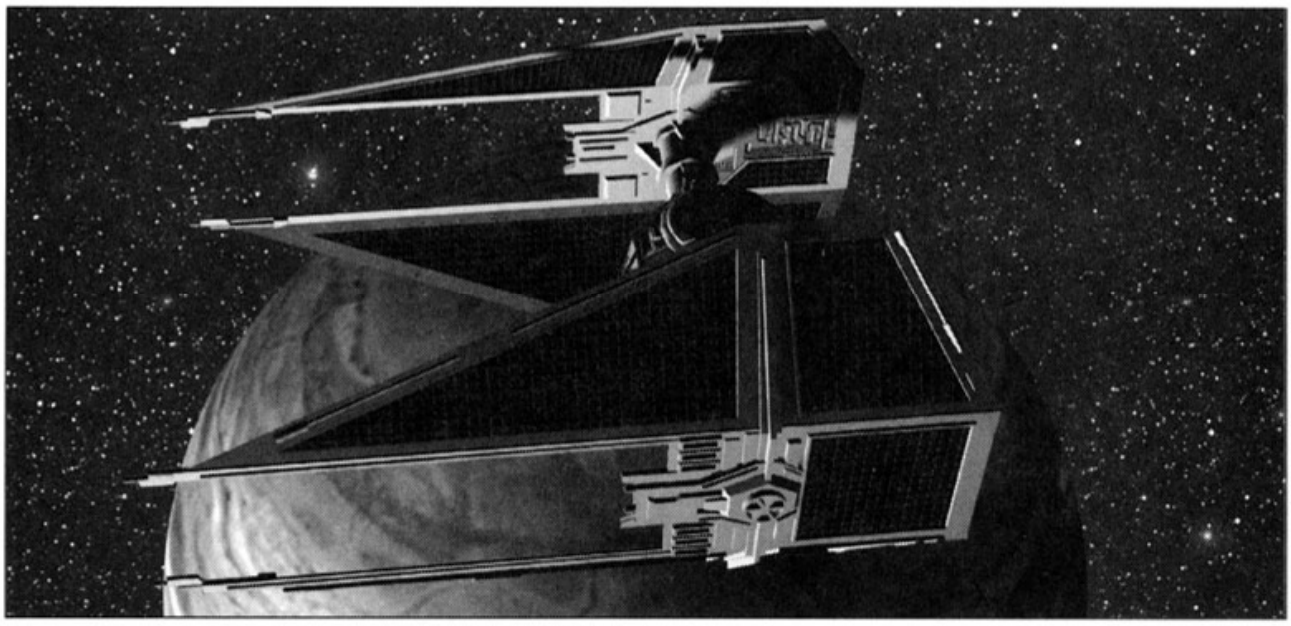
It was quiet now and the TIE interceptor was repaired. Maarek asked permission of the foreman to test the interceptor. It was an unwritten rule that Repairs was supposed to perform shakedown tests of the vehicles before handing them back over to Ops. Many mechs had learned the basics of piloting, and Maarek's swoop experience made him a natural.

"We're in planetary orbit over Farboon," the foreman told him. "There's no action out there. Go ahead, but make it quick. We're scheduled for another jump in three hours."

Maarek climbed into the TIE/In and adjusted the seat and belts. He wasn't wearing the standard TIE pilot's helmet and life support gear, but a modified version the repair crew had rigged together. He didn't worry about wearing sub-standard gear, however. This was the moment he always waited for. Even if it only lasted a few minutes — just long enough to test the fighter's systems — it was like being a bird freed from its cage.

He signaled over the comlink that he was ready and fired up the twin ion engines. There was a dull roar inside the cockpit and the vehicle began to shudder a little. He made a mental note to pass this one over to an engine specialist when he was finished. Then he guided the small craft onto its repulsor lifts and toward the airlock.

As soon as he blasted out into space, he was greeted by the image of a great planet that dominated the blackness. It was green, blue, and white and it hovered directly ahead. Maarek had never flown near a planet, and he took a moment to enjoy the view. He scanned for any other ships, but saw none. He rolled the fighter to take a quick look at the Star Destroyer — he never got tired of looking at it, could never quite absorb the grandeur and immensity of it. Then he began to run the TIE/In through its paces, watching carefully for any signs of malfunction.



Normally Repair operated on its own comlink frequency, but Maarek had discovered how to tune the link to a dual band that also picked up one of the non-restricted military channels. He liked to listen in on their operations, even though nothing of importance was broadcast over the channels he could hear.

Today was different. Just as he was about to head reluctantly for the hangar again, there was a sudden squawk on his headset and an urgent voice came on.

"All units. Is there anyone operational? Emergency. Please report."

Maarek did not answer. He wasn't supposed to be on this band, after all. But the voice kept calling and, apparently, not receiving any answer. Finally, Maarek decided to find out what was happening.

"This is Stele," he said into the mike. "What's the problem?"

"Who the hell are you, Stele? Where are you?" the voice demanded.

"I'm in Repair, testing a TIE/In for return to duty, sir."

"We've got a shuttle in trouble . . ." the voice said quickly. He seemed to be listening to someone else speaking at the same time because his transmission came in bursts of speech separated by short pauses. "No time to argue. Escort destroyed . . . Too close to planet . . . Get over to the far side . . . Find the shuttle . . ." Then he relayed some coordinates and vectors that Maarek only vaguely understood. But he fired the engines to full power and headed around the edge of the planet. "We'll be back . . ." was the last thing he heard from the voice. Then he was alone.

Looking at his scanners, he saw the Star Destroyer was gone.

The Shuttle

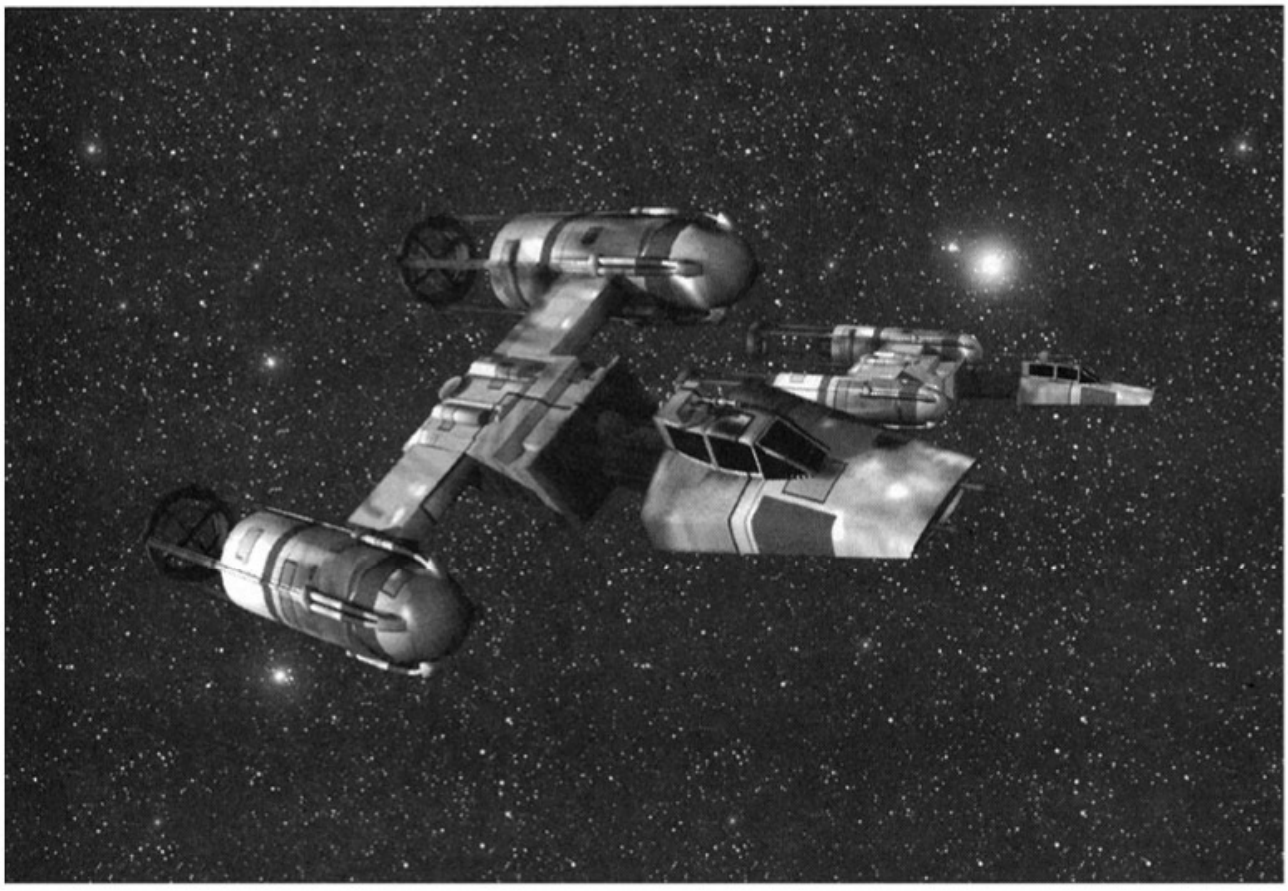
Navigation and acquisition of targets in raw space is no easy matter, but within a star system you sometimes get a little help from local sunlight glinting off metal surfaces. So it was that Maarek spotted the shuttle and its attackers maneuvering in the lonely blackness above the planet's atmosphere. Soon he could see the blue glow characteristic of ion cannons flickering across the surface of the shuttle's shields. Of course he had no idea what ion cannon glow looked like, just that it was easily visible.

"I see them," he said into the comlink. There was no answer.

As he sped closer, he was able to spot two Y-wing fighters shooting at the shuttle, which clearly showed Empire markings. There was some debris floating about, and he recognized parts of several TIE fighters.

Maarek didn't recognize the markings on the attacking Y-wings, but it didn't matter. They were the enemy. Without thought he rolled into an attack angle that gave him a chance at both Y-wings on the same pass. The TIE/In responded smoothly, more smoothly than any swoop ever could, and sped closer to the scene. Maarek's hand gripped the controls and his finger tightened slightly on the stud that would fire the interceptor's weapons.

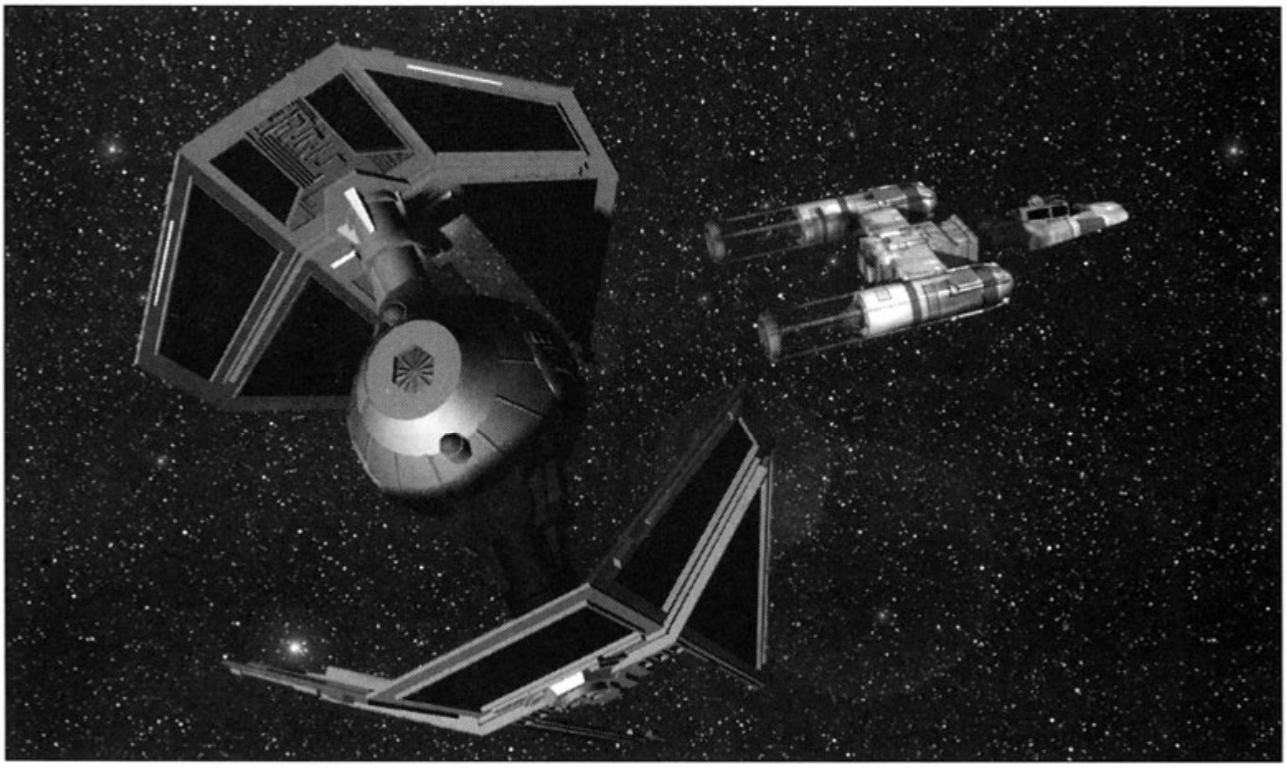
Just then, the nearer of the two Y-wings broke off and began to veer away. He'd been spotted! Maarek pressed the stud and saw the momentary glare of laser fire, but only from two of his lasers. He hadn't quad-linked the lasers, and he wasn't sure how to do so. Mechs generally weren't allowed to test weapons. Even so, the dual lasers fired straight and true, and there was a brief glow in the aft section of the Y-wing — a partial hit!



But the enemy craft did not slow down and appeared undamaged. Maarek was tempted to follow the Y-wing; it appeared to be moving much slower than his interceptor. The second Y-wing was still attacking the shuttle, however, and Maarek altered course slightly to bear directly on it. He began firing as he adjusted his angle, and his first shots went wide. As he closed the gap, he started seeing the telltale glow along the body of the Y-wing. He was hitting the shields! The Y-wing stopped firing at the shuttle and began to move away, but very slowly.

He was mesmerized by the sight of his enemy trapped in his sights, and failing to adjust his closing speed, he almost crashed into it. At the last second he veered off. Then his on-board computer registered that he was being fired upon. As he twisted the TIE/In through a hard diagonal loop, he spotted the other Y-wing closing in on him.

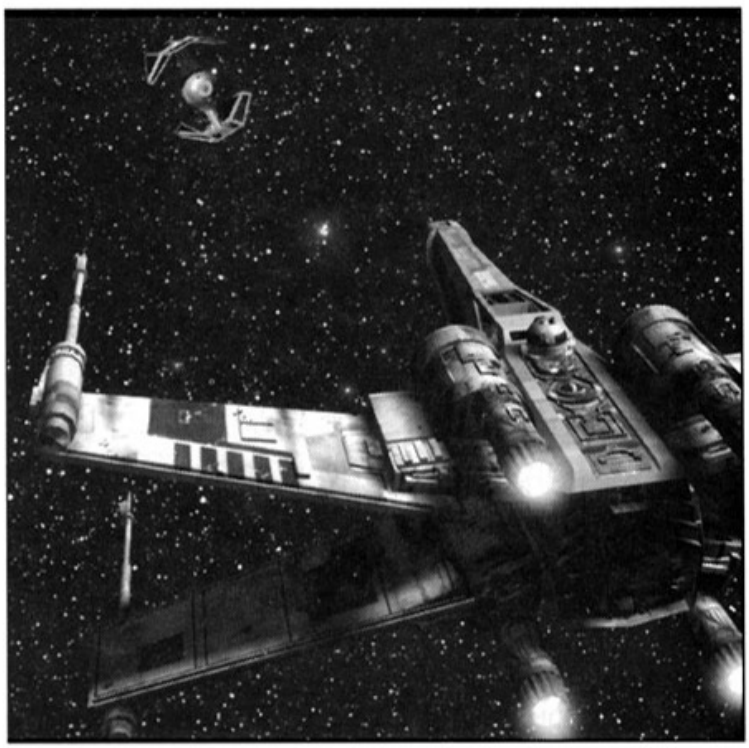
He had the advantage of speed, but he realized that he couldn't abandon the shuttle while it was still in danger. Fortunately his swoop training gave him an instinctual feel for combat and he doubled back on the Y-wing that had shot at him, watched it overshoot the shuttle, and went in behind both Y-wings again. That's when he spotted the first X-wing fighters. They popped out of nowhere several thousand meters off the shuttle's bow.



"I'm in big trouble now," he said to nobody in particular.

Maarek pressed the firing stud, taking a few last shots at the Y-wings, then yanked hard on the controls to pull into a narrow turn. He didn't know if the X-wings were after the shuttle, or him. He did figure that he wouldn't have much of a chance against the combined firepower of two Y-wings and two X-wings. If he was to do any good he'd have to pick his times, so he needed some distance.

He headed at full speed away from the crippled shuttle craft. The two X-wings followed. They were remarkably fast, and kept pace with him. They shot at him constantly, but they were just too far away for accuracy. He began to double back toward the shuttle and saw that the Y-wings were returning to the attack. Just then, the Star Destroyer reappeared at minimum safe distance from the planet. If he could just keep the enemy busy for a few more minutes, he was sure that help would arrive.



This thought was confirmed when the radio came back to life. "This is Vee Two X-ray calling TIE/In Four Oh Vee Niner. Do you read?"

Maarek wasn't used to military call signs. "If that's me you're calling, I'm here," he answered. "Get someone here — fast!"

"Help is on the way, TIE/In Four Oh Vee Niner. Hang in, there."

He couldn't make the interceptor move faster and the X-wings were getting closer. It would be a shame to get shot down now, with help so close. He started to corkscrew to throw off their aim — he had seen pilots do it in adventure holos. His idea was good, but in execution it left something to be desired. He lost control momentarily and found himself spinning and

disoriented. Trying to get back on course, he overcompensated and found himself heading directly for the planet. His scanners showed the X-wings still in pursuit — much closer now.



Something hit the interceptor. He felt a jolt, like a strong punch in the back, then the sensors went dead. There was no time for more maneuvering, so he headed into the sludge. He had heard that flying in atmosphere was hard and that no starfighter pilot liked it, but he knew atmospheric flight and he was gambling that the X-wing pilots didn't.

The TIE/In began to shudder and pitch as it hit the wall of gas and a thick mist immediately obscured his vision. He fought the interceptor, leveling out so as not to dive directly down into the planet's gravity well. His plan was to dip into the upper atmosphere and follow a shallow parabolic vector, reemerging once again in the vacuum. He hoped this would shake the X-wings.

It was like fighting an enraged bantha, and he had no way to know if he was really pulling out of the atmosphere or about to become a fireball on the surface of the planet. He tried to keep his bearings, but without sensors or visual clues, he had to rely on hope and luck.

A part of him, calm despite the crisis, realized that he had already pushed luck to the limit. With no formal training, he had just gone up against four enemy fighters and he was still alive! Had he used up all the luck he was allowed?

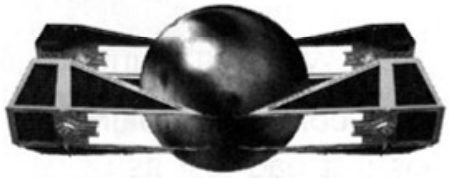
The answer was no. The mist surrounding the interceptor suddenly thinned and, with a last bone-jarring bump, burst out of the sludge and back into vacuum. There was no sign of the X-wings. For that matter, there was no sign of the Star Destroyer!

"Great," he said to himself. "Now what do I do?"

"Head back home, Stele," said a new voice on the comlink. "The excitement's over. Come around on vector One Two Eight Alpha."

"Sorry, sir. Sensors are out and I'm no navigator," Maarek said.

There was laughter in his headset. "Just turn right and follow the planet around. You'll find us. Or we'll find you."



The next few hours were a blur of activity. As soon as he got within range, the Star Destroyer hauled him in with a tractor beam — an ignominious ending to the most exciting adventure of his life. He was beamed into an unfamiliar hangar where a detachment of stormtroopers waited. As soon as he exited the ship, an officer told him to follow and led him from the hangar to a small room nearby. Then the officer and the stormtroopers left him alone in the room.

He sat at a small table. There were two chairs in the room and he picked the one that faced the doorway. He waited. And waited. "I'm in trouble," he thought. "But what did I do wrong?"

He sat for a long time, hours perhaps, before the door irised and emitted two stormtroopers in white and black armor. The troopers had their blasters drawn, but Maarek's eyes were focused on the man who followed them. He recognized the man immediately. It was Admiral Mordon! He looked tired.

The Admiral sat stiff and straight in the remaining chair, facing Maarek, silent, staring, his eyes blazing blue like an ion furnace. Maarek looked down at his hands resting on the table. The knuckles were white.

"You were lucky," Mordon said. His voice was quiet, just as Maarek had suspected it would be, and the medals on the man's chest rose and fell evenly with his breathing.

Maarek slowly raised his eyes, but could not quite meet Mordon's stare. "I know, sir. I hope —"

Mordon interrupted. "You were also very brave."

Something skipped inside Maarek's chest. That wasn't a reprimand. It was a compliment.

Mordon continued. "We had secured the area. I was on the way to inspect the planet with a minimal escort when the Rebels struck. If you hadn't delayed them . . ."

Maarek said nothing. He was too stunned. *I saved the admiral.*

". . . where did you learn to handle an interceptor like that, son?" Maarek snapped out of his daze just in time to catch Mordon's question.

"In Repairs, sir," he choked. Was that going to get him into trouble?

But the admiral raised an eyebrow. "Repairs . . ." He seemed to ruminate over the word a moment, as if it had lost its usual meaning. Then he asked, "You like it in Repairs, Stele?"

"It's all right," Maarek replied carefully. "We get to take care of the babies."

Again, Mordon raised an eyebrow. "Babies?"

"You know, sir. The pilots. They just hop into the cockpit and fly around in space while we have to break our hands twisting metal back in place or burn ourselves on hot sparks from the laser torches. . ."

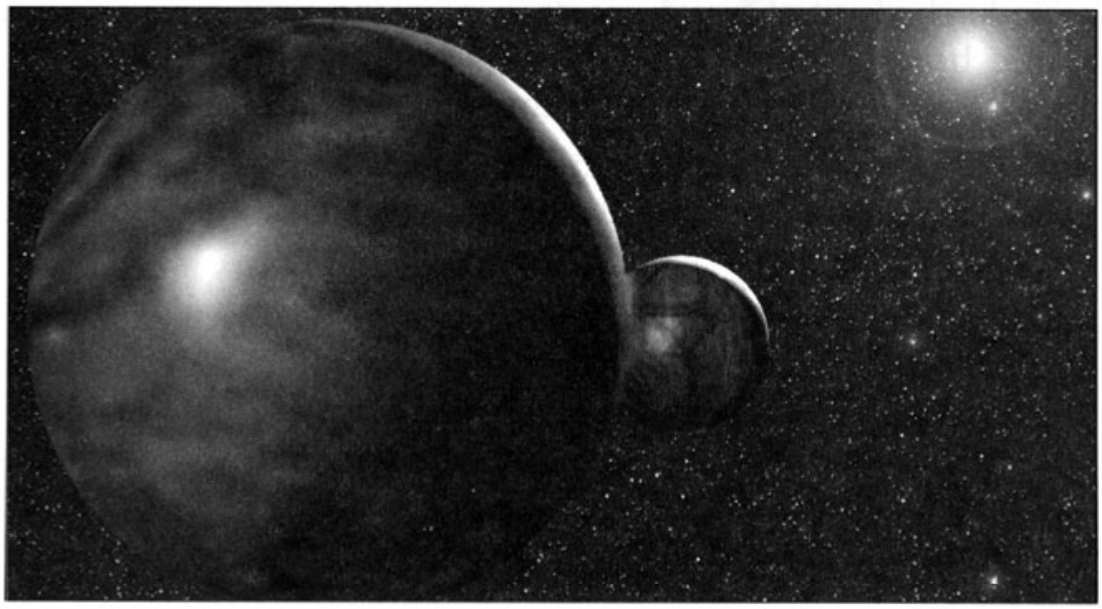
Maarek stopped, worried that he had stepped over the line, but Mordon just laughed out loud. "Is that what you think a pilot's life is like, son?"

Maarek said nothing.

Suddenly, Mordon stood up. "I bet you'd like to be one of the babies, wouldn't you, Mr. Stele?" he asked, leaning over the table and staring down at Maarek, who suddenly noticed something under one of his fingernails.

"Come see me in six months," Mordon said as he turned toward the doorway. "Let me know how you're doing."

Then he was gone, and Maarek was alone again. But not for long.



The Imperial Navy

Maarek was "invited" to join the Imperial Navy and told he was going to be trained as a fighter pilot. He had to wait a few days; then, after a jump he was escorted to an old freighter/transport. He spent a short, uncomfortable day aboard the freighter and arrived safely at a planetside Imperial base. During the whole trip nobody spoke to him. When he arrived at the base, he received some rations and was told to wait again. After a while, a small detachment of stormtroopers arrived with a pack of young men and women in tow. Then the troopers marched them to another freighter/transport. Or maybe it was the same one. Maarek couldn't tell. When everybody was stowed in, the leader spoke.

"You are on your way to Imperial basic training. As of this moment, you are Imperial soldiers, even though you look like scared dinkos and smell worse. You will sit still, keep quiet, and do nothing until you receive further orders."

It was a long and quiet trip, shivering in the cargo hold under the watchful eyes of the stormtroopers. They must have looked more like prisoners than elite Imperial recruits. Maarek fought off his concerns. He figured that it was all part of the game. No matter how good you were, they had to break you first, then build you up again. It was part of the weeding out process. If you broke too easily, then you wouldn't hold up under the pressures of combat, and were a danger to those who depended on you. If you wouldn't break at all, you were too independent and prideful, and could never be trusted completely. It was a fine line that every recruit would walk over the next six months.

The ship lurched out of hyperspace and everyone slid slightly on the deck as dynamic braking took hold. Suddenly, the stoic figures of the stormtroopers sprang to life, leaping through the huddled cadets, kicking those unlucky enough to be prone and shouting at the top of their lungs.

"On your feet, you mass of gravel maggots, or you won't live long enough to even begin basic training."

Maarek was fast enough to avoid a boot slung in his direction, and sprang up with a rush of adrenaline in his veins and scanned the room for the next challenge. He didn't have to wait long. As the stormtroopers herded them into some semblance of ranks, the forward airlock of the cargo hold slid open with a menacing hiss. There, with all eyes in the room upon him, stood a man-like form, backlit, dark, and larger than life.

He was clad in trooper armor, but the reddish light behind him cast an eerie glow, and an Imperial crest on the right breastplate literally screamed out the man's importance. As troopers moved to flank the man, Maarek noticed with some displeasure that the newcomer was more than a head taller than anyone in the room. Two massive hands reached upward and twisted the helmet release gingerly, belying the ease with which they could just have easily snapped a man's neck. The helmet rose and was tucked casually under a massive left arm. Some unlucky soul behind Maarek gasped and received a rifle butt to the side of the knee for the indiscretion. He writhed on the floor now, but had gained enough sense not to cry out.

Doubtless, others had stifled similar exclamations upon witnessing the scarred visage that glowered at them through one intense eye, its partner a memory behind crudely stitched skin. Maarek wanted to look away, but found it difficult. It probably wouldn't have been wise anyway.

"I am Senior Master Sergeant Jona T. Stark," it said, "but you will call me Sergeant, or Sir. You have no names other than those I choose to give you. You have no lives other than those I bestow upon you. You have no choice other than to obey. The Emperor is your life. I am his Voice. I will find the Warriors amongst you and guide them to the glory of the Empire. More importantly, I will find the unworthy, I will hold their hearts in my hand, and I will crush them."

And so it began...

Basic Training

The first day was a marvel of activity, chaos, and eventual order. They were processed, tested, marched, fed (a little), tested some more, divided into groups, and, finally, assigned quarters. Already several recruits that Maarek had noticed in the transport were missing, presumably sent back where they came from.

Maarek had no idea what his subjective time was, but the base time was late when he was finally able to collapse onto his hard, small bunk in a drafty barracks. Each recruit had been given a small holo and told, "Absorb this and be ready to regurgitate it tomorrow." And so he sat up, grabbed the holo and activated it.

Imperial Navy — Orientation

Excerpted from: Class 070536 Indoc Guide W5-754F-C2.15

For Official Use Only

Chain of Command

Flight Cadet
Flight Officer
Lieutenant
Captain
Commander
Major
Colonel
General
*** Vice Admiral**
*** Admiral**
*** Grand Admiral**

*** ranks unattainable in TIE Fighter.**

You are in training to become a pilot in the Imperial Navy. This is your opportunity to excel in the service of the Emperor. These are the ranks you may achieve, should you prove yourself worthy.

Medals and Ranks

You may earn certain emblems of recognition for service to the Empire. These medals are added to your permanent record and may be viewed in your personal datapad at any time.

Training Completion Certifications

Upon completion of four levels of any training course, each pilot will receive his general certificate. Seals for satisfactory training for each spacecraft are added to the general certificate upon completion of additional courses.

Combat Training Medallions

Upon completion of two missions in the historical simulator for each craft, a pilot receives a bronze combat training emblem for that craft. Completion of a third mission upgrades the medallion to silver. When all four missions are completed, the pilot is awarded a gold medallion.

Theater of Operations Service Medals

For completion of service to the Empire in battle, a pilot may receive service medals with additional stars and bars for battles within a particular theater of operations.

Back to the Vengeance

Over the next several weeks, he was tested, drilled in military procedure, put through basic physical training, and tested again. He had no idea where he was. Nobody ever said. And he learned soon enough not to ask. He learned a lot more as well, and to all outward appearances became a fully indoctrinated soldier of the Empire. He kept his own counsel, however, and endured until the ordeal was over.

When his basic training was done, he was picked up again, this time in a troop shuttle, and taken to an outpost on a forlorn-looking asteroid where he spent a few hours in a backwater depot chewing on rations and discussing matters of no importance with the lone agent in charge. He was the only recruit who had been left on that particular outpost. Eventually another shuttle arrived and took him to rendezvous with the *Vengeance* along with a few strangers.

In all, he had been away from the *Vengeance* for a little more than two months. Nothing much had changed.

Except that he was no longer quartered in the civilian area of the ship.

"Orders are posted on the holo screen up on the wall," announced the non-com when he debarked the shuttle. Maarek read his housing assignment. It was on Deck 3 and the map showed it to be near the main TIE fighter hangar. Pilot's quarters, he thought with a growing sense of awe and nervousness.

He had learned during basic training not to ask questions. This concept did not come easily to him, and several times he had been put on extra duty for opening his mouth. It's not easy to lose a lifelong habit in just a few weeks, but Maarek did learn to restrain himself, to bide his time, and to pick his friends and confidants with care.

One drawback to his new restraint was that he got thoroughly lost looking for his assigned quarters where a simple question or two might have gotten him there more quickly. At any rate, he found his way, but not before barging into areas where he was clearly not welcome, where officers and enlisted men looked up from what they were doing and glared. But nobody asked him what he was doing or offered any help, and Maarek went on his way as quickly as he could.

His new room was a haven of privacy after weeks in the training barracks and an hour or so lost on the massive Star Destroyer. There was a single cot in the room, and he lay down on it as soon as he arrived.

Moments later, someone came to the door and signalled.

"Come in," Maarek said tentatively.

It was Pargo. He stood there beaming stupidly, and Maarek almost burst out laughing. His friend was decked out in a crisp new naval uniform. He saluted.

Maarek returned the salute half-heartedly, sick already of the formality of the military life. "What's the big smile for?" he asked.

Pargo walked into the room and leaned against a built-in desk. "Good to see you, too," he said offhandedly. Clearly he was dying to tell Maarek something. He looked like the ice creature that had eaten the tauntaun.

"Come on. Out with it." Maarek didn't much like it when someone stretched out the telling of important news, and judging by the rictus that passed for Pargo's smile, this was something pretty big. "Are you going to stand there all day, or what?"

"OK. Don't get your trainats in a snit. I'm happy for two reasons. First, you're back from training and are finally one of us. There's a lot that goes on aboard the Star Destroyer that civilians never know about . . ."

"Yeah," said Maarek cautiously. "And the other reason?"

"I'm going to be a stormtrooper. They asked me to start training in three days."

Maarek wasn't sure why Pargo was so happy. Sure, the stormtroopers were among the most feared and respected of the military divisions, but wearing all that armor and being so nameless and faceless had never appealed much to Maarek. On the other hand . . .

"That's great, Pargo. I guess you'll fill out that armor real well. I think I'm going to be trained to be a pilot."

Pargo's smile faded. "You mean you're going to fly those rickety TIE fighters. Those things are death traps. Are you crazy?"

"Guess so," Maarek answered. "You heard about my little adventure?"

"Yeah," answered Pargo. "I heard. Just like you to hot dog it like that. You're never satisfied, are you?"

Maarek laughed. "Some of us have it; some don—"

But Pargo was serious again. "You just watch yourself. This isn't a swoop race. You're gonna end up in chunks floating through a gas cloud if you aren't careful."

"Worry about yourself, Pargo. Stormtrooper armor won't stop a direct blaster shot. And knowing you, you'll probably stand in front of a blaster just to find out."

"Guess we're both due for a short, fast life," Pargo managed, his lips curling at the corners in a wry smile. "Anyway, gotta go. I've got a duty schedule in a few minutes."

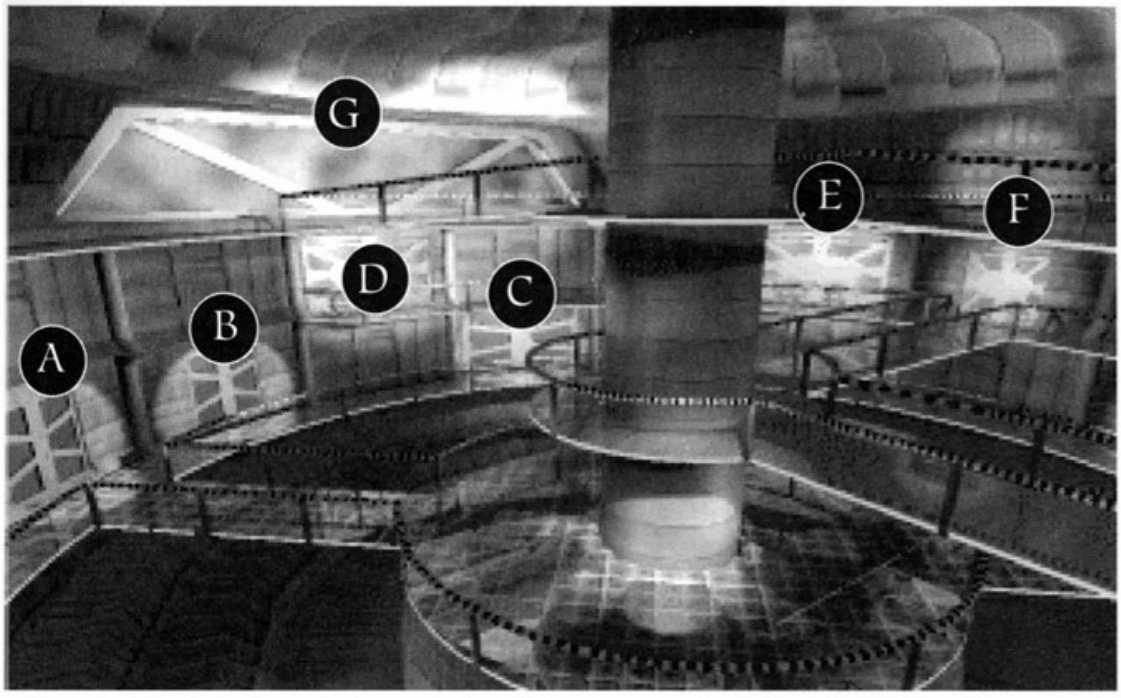
Shortly after Pargo left, a message appeared on the small comlink board in Maarek's room. It told him to report to pilot training at 0700 hours the next morning.

Pilot Training

The first day of pilot training consisted of a self-paced holo training session. He reported to the registration desk for pilots aboard the Star Destroyer and gave his name. The guards at the door then let him enter the training/flight ops concourse.

One of the other pilots, a young man everyone called Brick, joined him inside the concourse. They walked along a narrow catwalk inside a cavernous room. Ahead was a tall elevator column that reached up to the ceiling. Other catwalks curved around and through the space and various doorways lined the walls on several levels. Maarek gawked shamelessly at the spaciousness of the room. He was still having a hard time getting used to the dimensions of the Star Destroyer, and this was yet another reminder of the sheer immensity of the vessel.

Concourse



A. Registration
B. Training Simulator
C. Combat Chamber
D. Change Battles
E. Tech Room
F. Film Room
G. Continue Battle

Brick pointed out the various doorways, each leading to a different area.

"First, you've got the Training Simulator," he said. "Once you've taken some basic instruction, you'll go there to prove you know how to fly a fighter.

"Then comes the Combat Chamber. You get to fly simulations of real missions from history. The instructors here set a lot of store on how you do in the historical sims. Actually, it's pretty fun. It's just like the real thing, but you can get blown up and it doesn't matter. Not that you want to get used to being blown up.

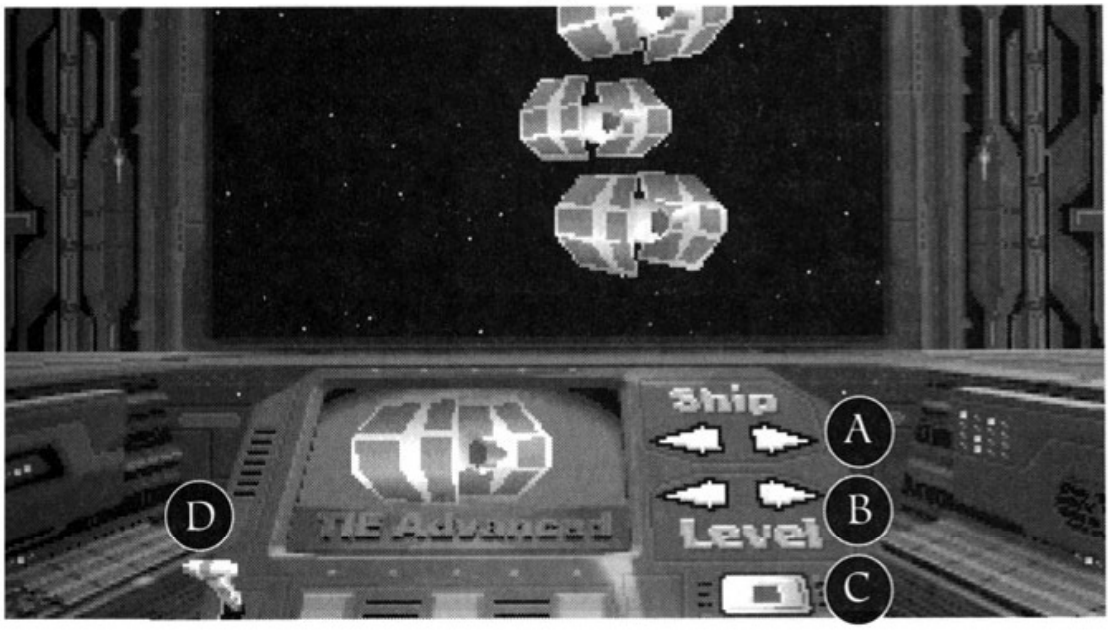
"On the second level, in the back, you get to check the holos of your battles in the Film Room. To the left is the Tech Room where you can learn all about various spacecraft. The instructors like you to spend some time there, too. They claim it might just save your life in combat.

"Finally, there's the doorway that leads to the ready room and real missions. After your training is done, that's where you'll go. Hey, it's time for your first sim lesson, cadet Stele. Good luck."

Maarek entered the Combat Chamber then, where a great machine opened to allow him inside. Once he was strapped in, the huge machine closed over him like some giant beast devouring him. All was darkness at first. Then, with a mental lurch, he found himself staring out into a starry vacuum. His hand gripped the controls as a sensation of movement and weightlessness overcame him. The simulation was as close to flying as he could imagine, and he quickly gave himself over to the experience.

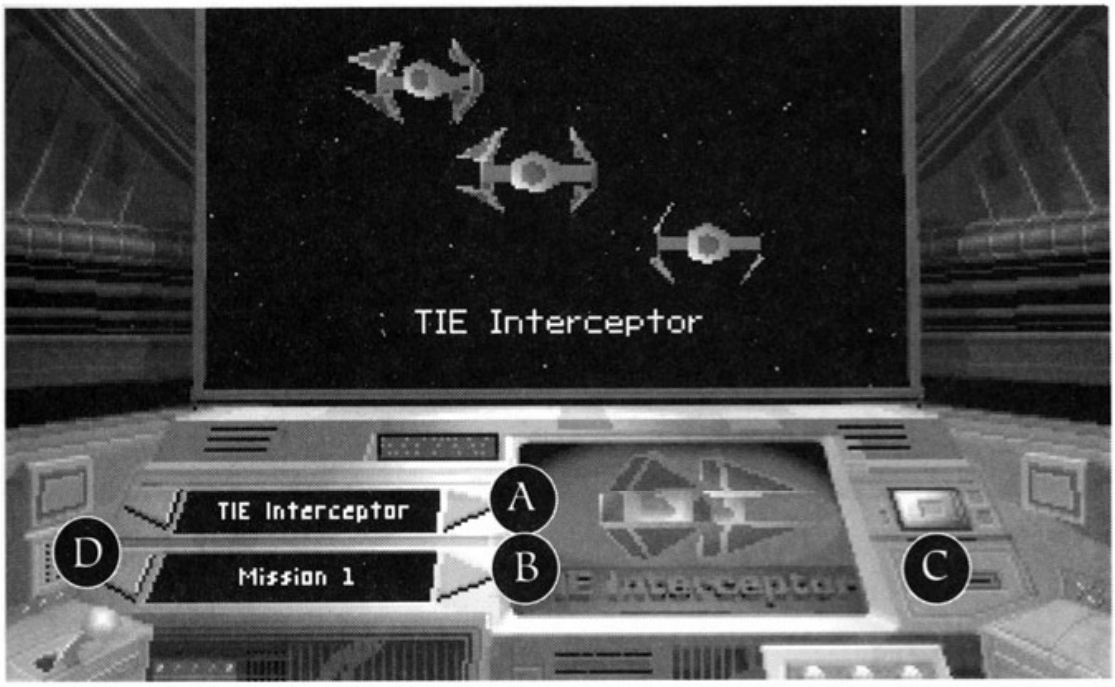
During his first session, Maarek learned basic information about the role of a pilot as well as the systems and controls found on Imperial fighter craft. Much of it was familiar — he had repaired or replaced most of these systems at one time or another. Some of it was new, however, and he absorbed it all eagerly. The sooner he got through this part of the training, the sooner he'd be back behind the controls of a real starfighter!

The Training Simulator



A. Ship Select
B. Level Select
C. Begin Training
D. Exit

The Combat Chamber



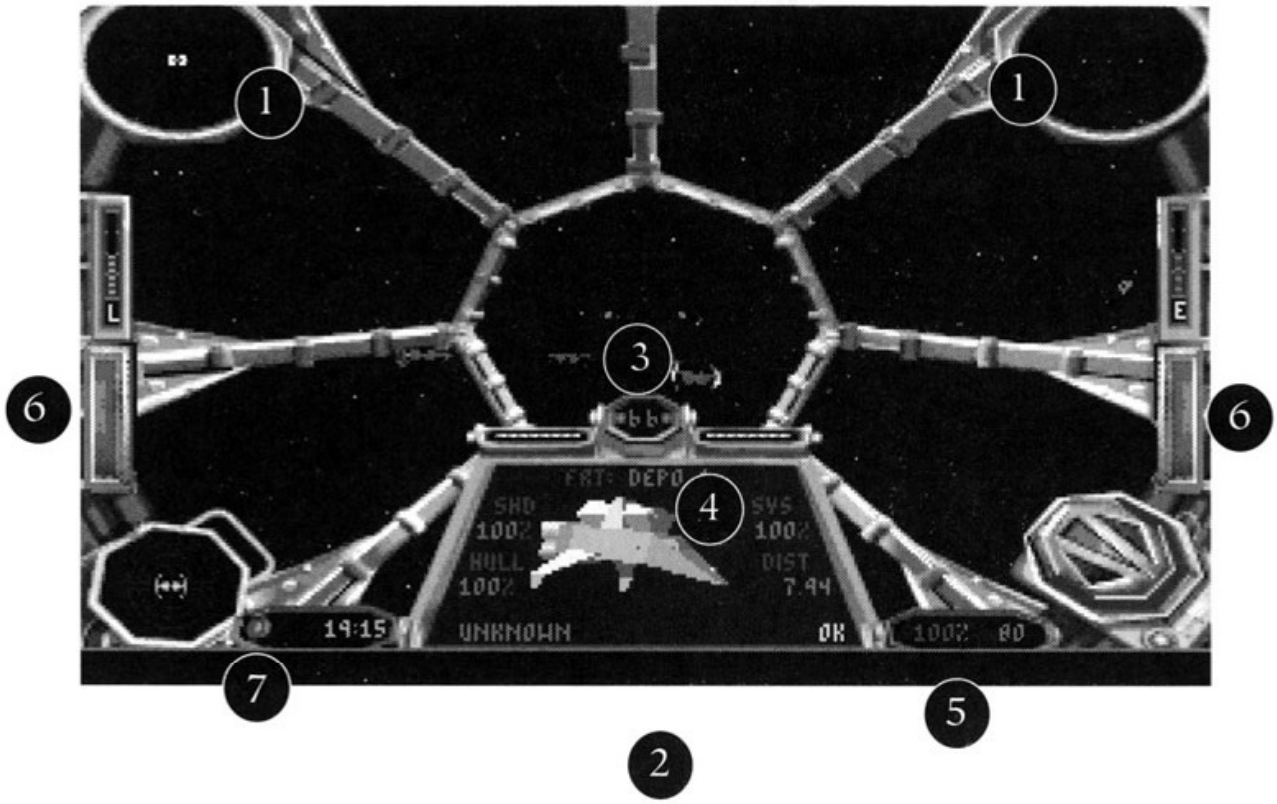
A. Ship Select
B. Mission Select
C. Begin Simulation
D. Exit

Cockpit Instrumentation Checkout

It was nearly a week before Maarek got his first training opportunity inside a trainer TIE bomber. The instructor, a Captain Trox, sat in an extra seat in the specially modified craft and helped Maarek become familiar with the instruments and their functions. Of course Maarek had already learned most of this on his own during his stint in Repairs, but he kept his mouth shut, for the most part.

"First thing you do, Cadet Stele, is settle into this seat and adjust straps and helmet. Most of our fighter craft lack life support, and this helmet and mask are what will keep you breathing, mister. So don't forget to check it out before you get spaceborne."

Maarek adjusted the helmet and tasted the slightly stale air that came through the rebreather apparatus. Captain Trox donned his own helmet and spoke through the comlink. His voice was tinny in the speaker, but clear. He walked Maarek through the proper pre-launch procedures and soon robotic

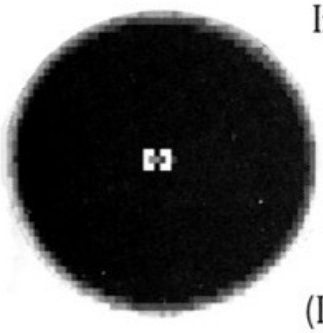


1. Scanners
2. CMD
3. Targeting HUD
4. Weapons
5. Throttle Control
6. Energy Array — LES
7. Shields and Damage

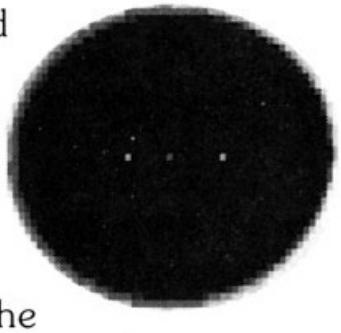
arms lifted the trainer TIE bomber and transported it along the hangar rail system to the launch platform. They powered up the twin ion engines and lifted off. Trox piloted the craft at first on auxiliary controls and soon they were in open space, the *Vengeance* falling away in the distance.

"Today you're going to learn about standard cockpit controls. In this trainer craft, all parts of the cockpit are clearly labeled, and I will refer to the labels as I point them out to you. Listen carefully. I don't like to repeat myself. And you don't want to be in a small cockpit with me when I'm in a bad mood."

1. Scanners



In the upper right corners are the front and rear scanner screens. Your life depends on these screens, so learn to read and understand them.



The Front Scanner (on the left) tells you what's in front of you. Friendly (Imperial) craft appear as red dots on the scanner. When the dot is centered in the display, the craft is directly in front of you. Enemy craft appear as green dots. Craft of unknown allegiance will appear as blue or purple dots. The brighter the dot, the closer the craft. Any currently targeted craft will appear bracketed in the display.

Everything I just said is true of the Rear Scanner, except dots that appear there are behind you. Check this chart if you can't remember these simple instructions. Any questions?

Red = Friendly	**Yellow = Warheads**
Green = Enemy	**White = Mines, Probes, & Satellites**
Blue or Purple = Unknown	

Maarek didn't have any questions.

2. CMD

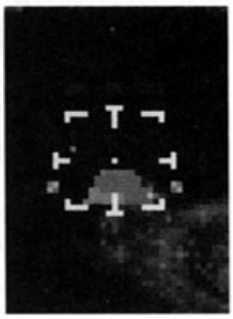
This is the CMD. Get used to checking these readouts frequently. Any craft you've currently targeted will appear in the viewscreen. To cycle through available targets, hit the button labeled "T" on your console deck. To find the

nearest light enemy or unknown craft, press the button labeled "R." To move backwards through the list of scannable targets, press "Y" on the console.



The view screen shows the current target, its identification, if available, its distance from your current position, and its orientation — useful for setting up an attack run. In addition, the CMD can usually give you information about the targeted craft, including cargo contents and shield, hull, and systems status levels. The lower right corner readout describes the specific component on the targeted craft. If you've got your enemy showing hull damage, you've got him. Remember, most Rebel fighters have shields, so once you've begun to damage the hull, they're ready to be finished off.

3. Targeting HUD



When you donned the flight helmet, you may have noticed a floating display in the center of the viewport. This is your Targeting HUD. Most Imperial fighters carry onboard targeting support. In the old days, we acquired enemy targets using manual sights, but there aren't many of us left who can do that.

What you've got here, boy, is a sophisticated sensor-driven target system. It tells you when you're at the proper firing angle by glowing green. Me, I find if I'm not ready to fire when the target is lined up, this green light isn't going to help much, but some of you younger pilots seem to like it. Oh, and if a target is beyond visual range, it will be bracketed in a yellow box.

Around the HUD you'll see the current weapon configuration — whether linked or unlinked lasers. This craft has two laser systems. Some of your fighters may have more. Set them to fire separately or linked. The same targeting system serves for missile locking, glowing yellow when lock is being acquired and red when the target is fully locked in. Along the top of the HUD is the OTIA — your standard Outside Threat Indicator Array. Watch these three indicators if you want to survive. They will tell you if your ship is currently targeted by another craft's weapon systems. The left indicator lights up when a starfighter's laser is trained on you. The middle when a capital ship is targeting you. The right represents a warhead.

4. Weapons



At the top of the CMD is the weapons readout. The center readout lists the number of missiles or torpedoes you currently have. On a TIE fighter, that number is zero. On other craft, the number will vary.

The two bars on either side of the missile/torpedo inventory represent the charge state of your onboard laser banks. They charge in two phases. Normal charging results in a dull green readout. Once full normal levels are attained, weapons will begin to supercharge. When they glow bright green, they are supercharged. You'll get a little more power and range from your laser systems when they're supercharged. You can shoot until the bar goes dark. Then you'll have to wait for the lasers to recharge.

"And you set the recharge rates with the F9 button, right?" Maarek added before he could control his mouth.

Trox grunted. "Yeah. You're paying attention. You get points for that. Now keep quiet and listen."

"Yessir," answered Maarek. To be truthful, he already knew all this and was getting a little bored. Doesn't this guy have anything I don't already know? he thought.

5. Throttle Control



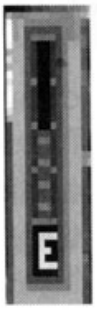
Each starfighter has a throttle control readout. Its position will vary from ship to ship. Get used to recognizing it. On this ship it is to the right of the CMD. The first number is your throttle indicator, measured in percent of available power. Right now it's at 100 percent. Next to the throttle indicator is your current relative speed. Speed is affected not only by throttle settings, but by weapon and shield recharge settings. I'll get back to that later, so pay attention.

6. Energy Array — The LES

The key to successful control of any starfighter is the ability to manage your energy. Each spacecraft has a power plant that delivers a certain amount of power, and how you direct that power will affect the performance of your fighter.

On standard Imperial fighters you are required to manage the resources of your engines, weapons, shields — if you have them — and. . . anything new that might appear. The display that shows you how this energy is being allocated is called the LES — for Laser, Engine, Shield. Look first at the engine readout.

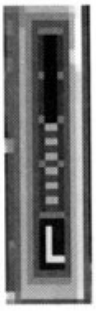
Engines



Most of you new recruits confuse the throttle with the engine energy setting. The throttle controls the amount of available energy you'll use; however, that may be less than one hundred percent of the engine's power if you're using some of that power to recharge weapons or shields.

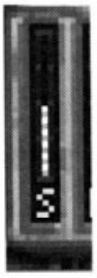
You control the throttle with your left hand while your right hand holds the control stick. You do not directly change the Engine energy balance, however. That is entirely a function of the amount of engine power used to recharge weapons and shields. You got that, Stele?

Lasers



Next to your seat is a switch labeled "F9." It controls weapon recharge rates. The readout labeled "L" indicates the percentage of energy from the engines applied to recharging weapon systems. You may recharge at zero, minimum, normal, increased, or maximum rates. Later I will instruct you in the proper use of these settings.

Shields



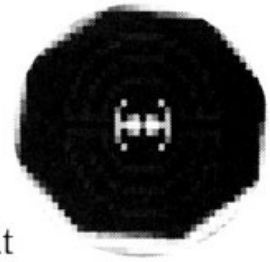
The standard TIE starfighter lacks shields, so the readout for shield recharge rate on this craft is covered with a plasteel plate. Future development in the TIE class may add shields and other improvements. On fighters that do have shields, like the Assault Gunboat, the recharge rate is located below the weapon recharge gauge. Settings are the same as with weapons.

Maarek noticed a plate below the engine gauge on the right. "This looks like another gauge," he suggested, pointing to the plate.

But Trox only blew out a sigh. "Curious recruits who interrupt my lectures usually don't survive their first encounters. I'll tell you what you need to know, when you need to know it? That all right with you, Cadet?"

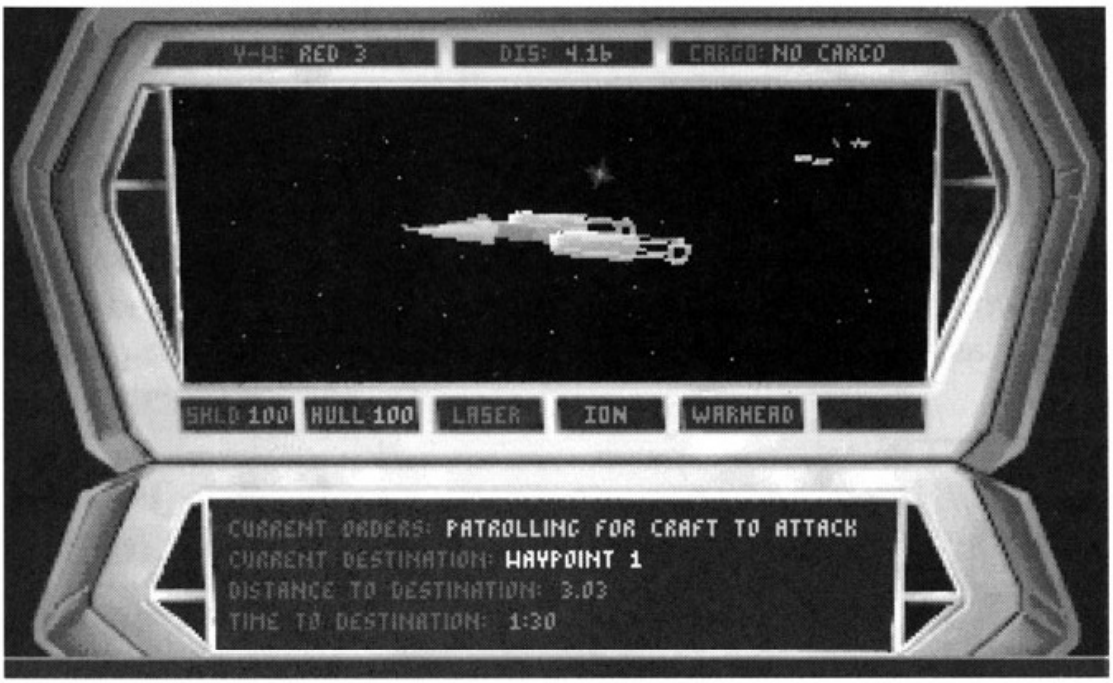
"Sir," Maarek replied, afraid to get in more trouble by saying anything else.

7. Shields and Damage Screen



To the left of the CMD is a small round screen that shows the condition of your craft. It also shows your shield configuration, if any. TIE starfighters do not carry shields. They rely, instead, on speed and maneuverability, plus good operation planning and execution. However, some Imperial craft, like the Assault Gunboat, carry shields. If your fighter does carry shields, you may use the "S" key to toggle through different configurations — full front, full back, or 360 degree coverage. In the event that you take direct hits to the shields, the color of the readout will change from green to yellow to red and the shield coverage will be reduced. Once the shields are gone, the only thing between you and enemy fire is the hull armor, and you don't want to rely on that too long. Hull damage is likewise color coded.

Threat Display

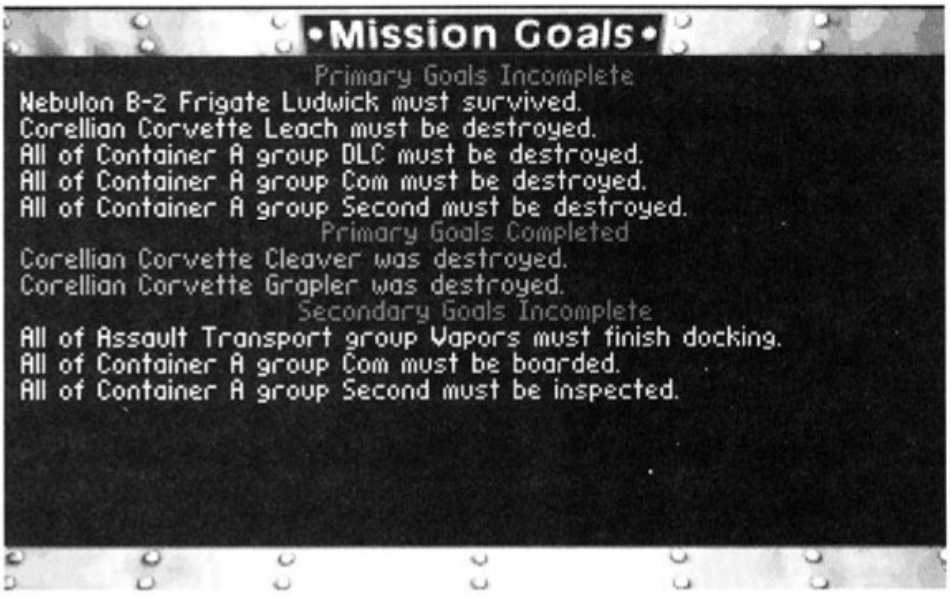


We've got some new technology that gives you a close look at any craft you've targeted. At the top of the screen is the name of the craft, its distance from you, and its current cargo, if known. In the middle of the screen you'll see shield and hull condition, weapon load and current fire states. The bottom of the window shows information about the target's current orders, distance and time from its target. Tap the key marked "Z" to open the Threat Display.

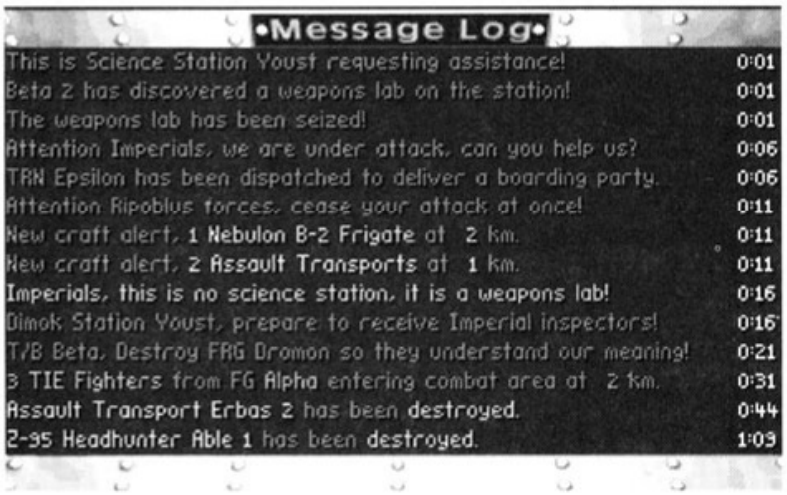
Cockpit Information Displays

In addition to your standard action displays, you've got a variety of other mission critical information available. These CIDs (Cockpit Information Displays) are important to your functioning as a part of the combat team.

Mission Goals



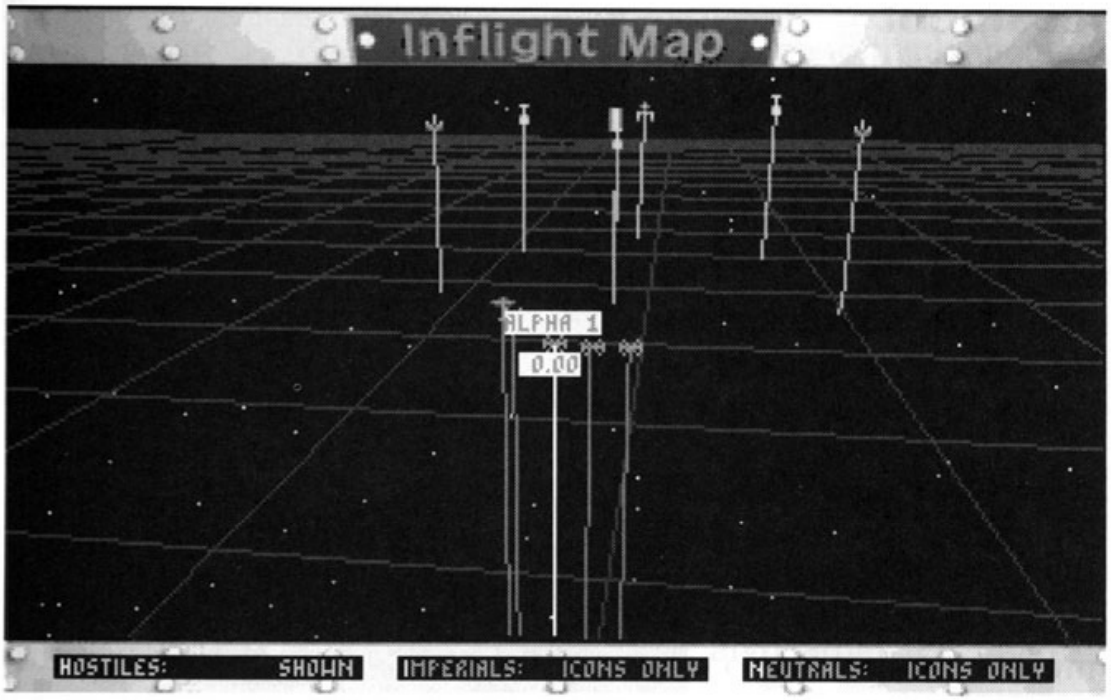
During a mission, you can press the "G" key to get a readout of mission goals. If you're in doubt what your mission is, check this readout. Updates will occur as the mission progresses. Check it often. These goals are why you're out there, cadet.



Message Log

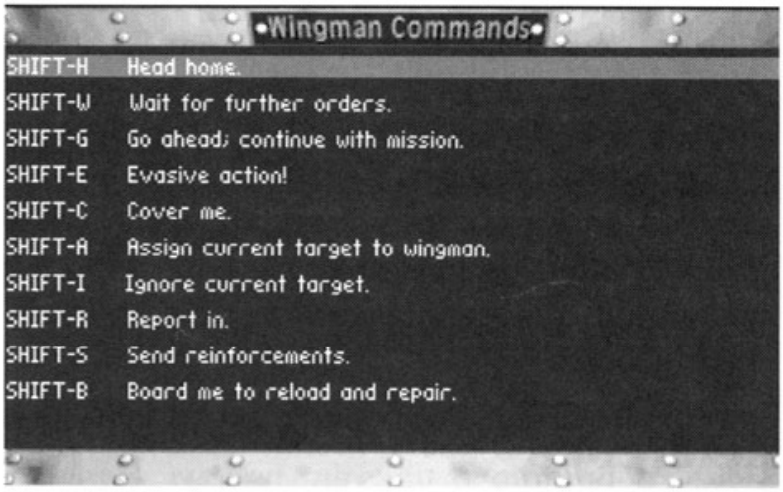
Press "L" to review all incoming radio messages and onboard system reports received during a mission — in case you were too busy dodging fire to notice the first time they came in.

In Flight Map Display



During a mission, your scanners will keep an up-to-date holographic map of all nearby spacecraft. Pressing the key marked "M" will call up this display. Use your stick controls to move about in the map.

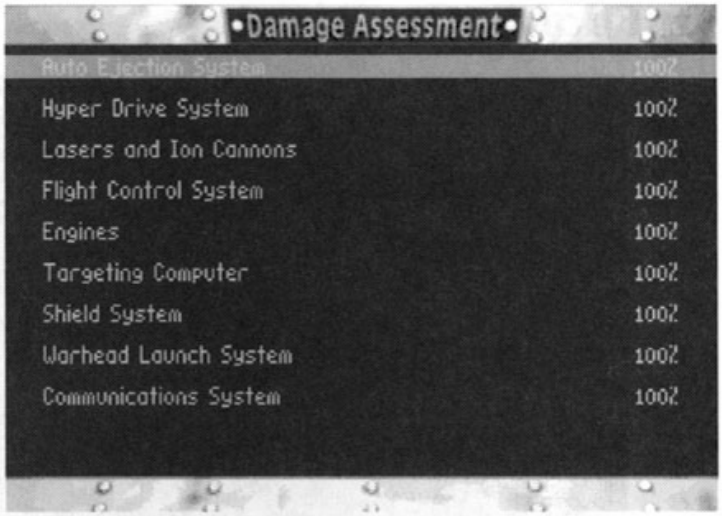
Wingman Commands



You may issue commands to your wingmen, or to any other craft within your authority. Use "Shift-Z" on your console during flight to bring up a list of available commands, or issue them directly.

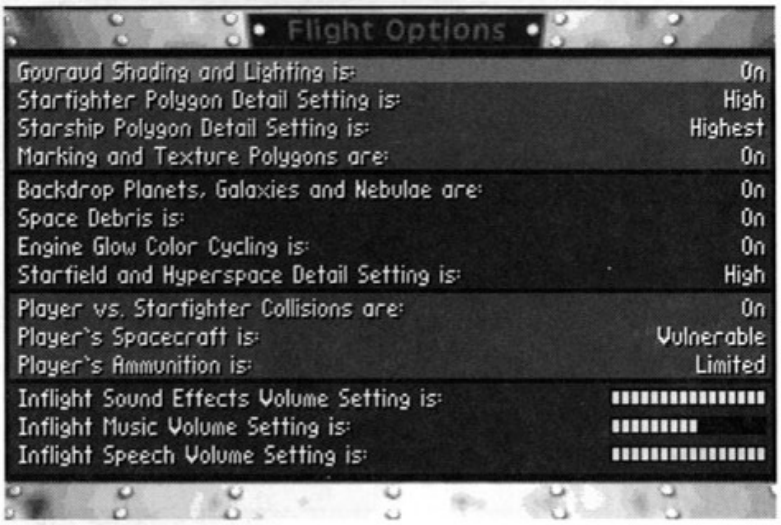
Damage Assessment

Pressing "D" calls up the damage assessment. Use this to prioritize repairs and to determine the amount of damage your ship has sustained. Just remember, you may not have time for damage assessment. Try not to get hit.



Flight Options

Your flight options display allows you to modify the parameters of the audio and visual display systems. Press the key marked "Esc" to access flight options during a mission.



Camera Recording System

Every pilot must keep a record of action. Turn on the camera by pressing the "C" key. Turn it off again by pressing "C" again. After a mission, all mission tapes will be assembled into a composite record which will be reviewed by your superiors. You will often be invited to view the record again. You can also review your mission in progress by pressing the "V" key to turn on the replay display in your headset.

Keyboard Reference

To obtain a complete reference to your ship's controls, press the "K" button on your console.

Combat Checkout List

During combat situations, you won't have a lot of time to think about what to do next. You've got to train until you're in complete control of your spacecraft from the first moment you hit space. You will now learn the proper sequence of pre-combat operations, and you will practice them until you can perform them automatically.

1. Press the button marked "C" to start your onboard camera. Imperial regulations require you to keep a holo record of your activities.
2. Press the button marked "X" to set your craft in dual fire mode.
3. Press F9 twice to set laser recharge rates to maximum. If you also have shields, press F10 twice to maximize shield recharge rates.
4. Set throttle to maximum.
5. Press the button marked "R" to locate and target the nearest non-Imperial starfighter or light-armed craft.
6. Once lasers are fully supercharged, press F9 three times to set recharge rates to normal.
7. If shields are present, reset to normal recharge rates once secondary shields are fully charged.

Maarek went through the pre-combat procedures several times, making few mistakes. But Trox wasn't satisfied, even when he ran through the procedure perfectly.

"Faster," Trox would order. "You're as slow as a space slug. Where do you think you are, your momma's dinner table? You'll be eating laser fire if you don't move faster than that."

Energy Management

"That's about all for today, Stele. You want to take us back in?"

"Yes. Sir," Maarek replied, already beginning to angle the TIE fighter around in a tight turn back toward the Star Destroyer. Maarek figured to keep his mouth shut, though he wanted to ask some questions, but Trox, it seemed, was in a talkative mood.

"The real key to successful control of your fighter craft is managing energy," he said suddenly. "Do you remember what I told you about the LES displays?"

"I do, sir," Maarek answered promptly.

"All right. I want you to slow this fighter down the most efficient way you can think of."

Maarek's hand twitched on the throttle controls and he was about to pull back on the lever. He stopped himself and quickly reasoned out Trox's order. The "most efficient" way . . . Maarek reached for the button marked F9 and pressed it twice, placing the laser recharge rates at maximum.

"Well . . ." came Trox's tinny voice over the speaker. "I'll give you that one, boy. Not many green recruits get that one right. OK. Here's an advance on lesson two.

If you control energy output, you'll control your craft. This is even more the case in fighters that have shields. Here are the basic configurations you'll use in shielded craft. In fighters without shields, your options are more limited.

On the CMD screen, the following list appeared:

Normal Settings (Non-Threat)

Cannons: 50%

Shields: 50%

Throttle: Full

Maximum Speed

Cannons: 0

Shields: 0

Throttle: Full

Maximum Firepower and Speed

Cannons: 100%

Shields: 0

Throttle: Full

Normal Attack Configuration

Cannons: 100%

Shields: 50%

Throttle: Full

Minimum Speed

Cannons: 100%

Shields: 100%

Throttle: As needed

"If you're as smart as you act, boy, you'll commit these configurations to memory. Make them as automatic as your pre-combat checkout, and you'll have a fighting chance."

They were nearing the Star Destroyer, and Trox let Maarek perform the necessary communications with landing control. Soon they were tractored into the hangar and the robotic arms carried them back to the hangar. Maarek's initial instructional flight was over. And he had, in the end, actually learned something!

Picket Duty

Maarek's first mission after becoming a bonafide starfighter pilot was a routine assignment at a waypoint. He was temporarily based on a small corvette — nothing as grand as the Star Destroyer.

He entered the pilots' ready room for the first time. It was nothing more than a long hallway lined with hanging TIE pilot regalia, the rows of helmets gazing sightlessly into the near distance. It looked like some planetside trophy case, and Maarek had a momentary vision of some giant creature that collected TIE pilots for sport. He shook off the vision and began to search for the suit assigned to him.

There was only one other pilot in the ready room. He donned the pilot's outfit with practiced ease, and Maarek stopped to observe a moment as the man pulled on the helmet, sealed it carefully to the body of the suit, and then donned his gloves at last. The man turned, as if noticing Maarek for the first time.

"Easy mission," he stated, his voice thin and nasal through the helmet speaker. "Name's Cadrath. You're the new recruit? Stele?"

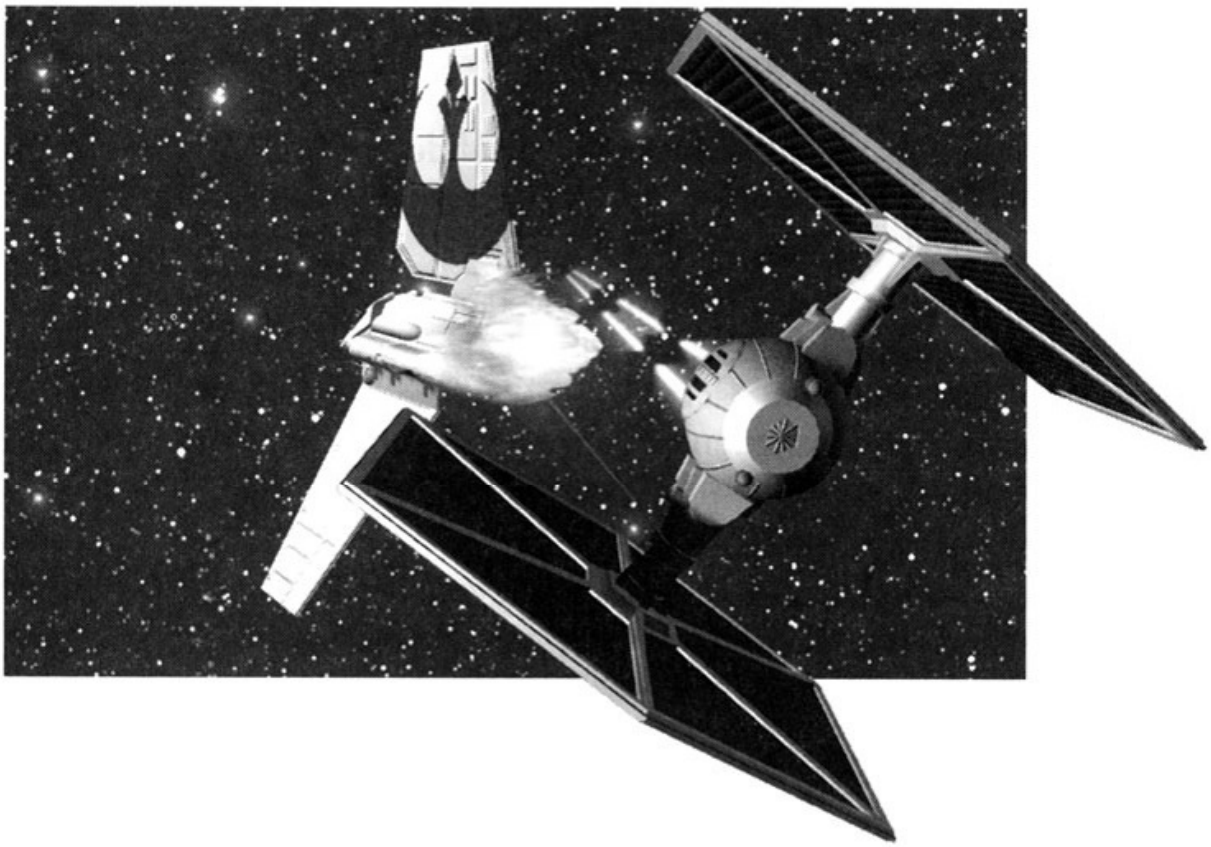
Maarek nodded.

Cadrath extended a gloved hand, and Maarek returned the gesture. "Better get ready. We launch in just a few minutes. This one here's yours." Cadrath pointed to a suit, indistinguishable from all the others.

Maarek nodded again. "Thanks," he said, and began putting on the gear, oversuit first, then boots, helmet, gloves. Cadrath showed him how to inspect everything first, especially the breathing tubes.

"With no life support aboard a TIE fighter, each pilot has to rely on his suit to protect him from the hard death of the vacuum," he told Maarek. "Don't assume anything," he added.

Maarek followed Cadrath from the ready room to the loading bay. In the corvette, the TIE fighter dock was small, and he quickly found the craft assigned to him. It was an older model TIE fighter, scarred and burned from many battles, and Maarek found himself hoping the repair facilities aboard the corvette were well-equipped.



There wasn't time to inspect the craft, so Maarek took a deep breath and climbed aboard, strapping himself in and doing a quick equipment checkout. Then he fired up the engines and allowed the robotic lifters to jockey the small fighter into position over the hatch. A moment later, he was spaceborne and felt the exhilaration of weightless flight. Then Cardath came on the com-link.

"Form up with me, Stele. We've got picket duty."

It was an uneventful duty, simply flying around and sensor-scanning various freighters and transports that jumped into the area. Then a group of six ordinary freighters arrived and Maarek fired up his engines, nosing his starfighter over in their direction. He used his target locator to select the first of the freighters and headed directly at it. Flying close to the freighter, his scanners revealed that it was carrying legal cargo — food supplies. Bound for some faroff world, he thought. He used the target locator and turned toward the second freighter.

Everything remained routine until he reached the fifth freighter.

"Weapons!" he called into the comlink. "I've got a load of weapons here."

"Good work, Stele," came the answering message. "Help is on the way."

Just then, the onboard computer registered that several new shuttles had appeared out of hyperspace. These new shuttles did not identify themselves, which was enough evidence of their unlawful intent. Maarek found the nearest one on the target locator and jerked his TIE fighter over in a hard turn.

He came quickly upon the transport, and a visual sighting showed the hated symbol of the Rebel Alliance on its dorsal fin. The Rebel shuttle was slow, however, and after increasing laser recharge rates to maximum, Maarek still was forced to lower engine power to 2/3. He opened fire without delay, staying easily on the shuttle's tail. When he came close enough, the target identification system confirmed the shuttle's identity. He watched the indicator between shots to see how much damage the enemy had sustained.

While he was so engaged, other TIE fighters arrived and there was a confusion of laser blasts from the opposing spacecraft.

"Come on," he urged. He was speaking to his dual-firing lasers, which made extremely slow work of destroying the shuttle. He was anxious to help

the other pilots. But the shuttle's shields were strong, and even with supercharged blasts, they held out a long time.

Suddenly the shuttle ahead turned sharply to the right. Another enemy shuttle appeared from behind it, boring directly down on Maarek's unshielded TIE fighter. His threat indicator lit up and he jerked off course in a sharp turn, thinking to avoid enemy fire. But he hadn't counted on friendly fire, and he almost ran directly into the beam of an oncoming TIE fighter who had joined in the pursuit. Only a last minute juke saved him.

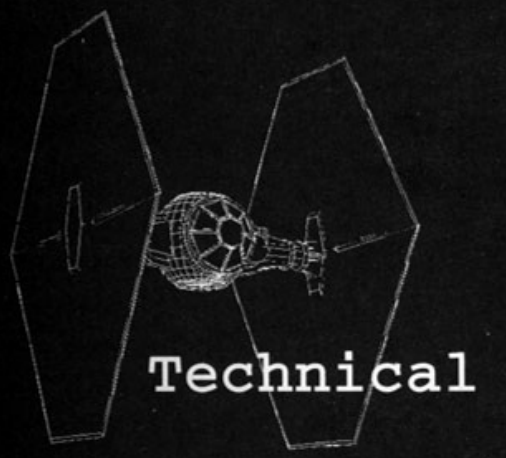
He quickly found the shuttle he had been chasing and attached himself to its tail once again. But his hand on the stick was shaking and he could feel the perspiration dripping down his face inside the confines of his helmet. His breathing, too, was ragged. How easy it would be to die in one of these space buggies. Pargo had been right.

In the end, Maarek survived. He shot down three Rebel shuttles as they arrived in successive waves. Only two TIE fighters were lost in the battle, and the Rebels were routed. The squadron commander congratulated the survivors and held a short ceremony for the dead.

Maarek retired to his temporary quarters after the ceremony and sat for an hour with his head in his hands. He had watched one of the Imperial pilots die. His TIE fighter had collided with a Rebel ship and disintegrated. The Rebel ship's shields took a beating, but the shuttle was not destroyed. It was a sobering moment. Maarek realized that the only way to survive as an Imperial pilot was to fly the better craft. There was only one way to get that opportunity. He had to be the best pilot in his squadron. He had to earn the right to be counted among the elite. Because only the elite had any hope of surviving for long.

At that moment, Maarek's vision appeared before him. He saw it as a tunnel stretching off into the future. At the end, a bright light awaited him. Was it an early and explosive death, or would he become a star among the Imperial elite? He pondered the question until he fell asleep. In his dreams, he heard the Emperor's voice.

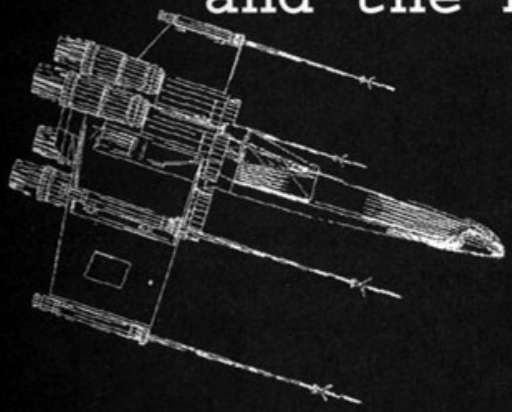
"Maarek. You have been called upon to join us, to join for the good of all beings . . . You are mine."





Technical Specifications:

Spacecraft of the Imperium and the Rebel Alliance





Doc. No. V492771S18DQ



Starfighters of the Alliance



As the former senatorial malcontents and dissidents continue to sway the weak-minded to their side, the puny forces of the Rebellion have been able to attract some supporters who should know better. Not counting the alien scum of Mon Calamari, who are reportedly refitting their considerable starfleet to aid the Alliance, there are several key firms who at one time worked legitimately with the Empire. Among them are the traitors at several important starfighter design facilities. The most notorious of these are the Rebel sympathizers at Incom Corporation who stole the X-wing prototypes and handed them over to the Alliance.

Given their shortage of supplies and skilled workers, we had previously doubted that the Rebel trash could, in fact, produce any viable starfighters, but they have far exceeded our expectations. There are certainly several squadrons of X-wings in operation, and more are being built at secret facilities not yet known to our sources. In addition to the X-wing, we have obtained preliminary information regarding three other Alliance starfighters — the Y-wing, the B-wing and the A-wing.

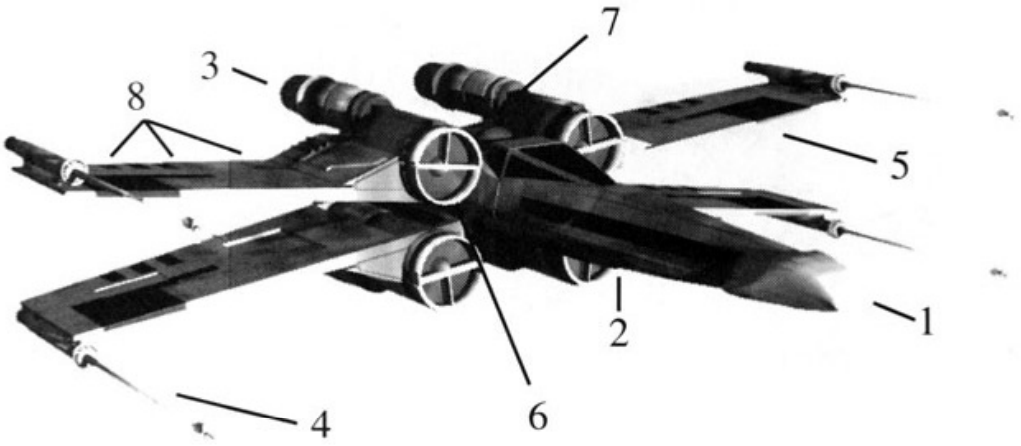
Of course, the Y-wing is no secret. Before the hated X-wings began to show up, the Y-wing was the basic Rebel starfighter. In fact, it may be that the dogs at Koensayr had something to do with the defection of the Incom turncoats. Whatever the truth may be, Y-wings have been turned out in large numbers, and most of the pre-Rebellion Y-wings have somehow turned up in Alliance hands.

The A-wing is the Rebels' newest craft, meant to challenge our TIE Interceptors. It is fast, maneuverable, and seems to carry special sensor jamming equipment. Several times these A-wings have managed to attack our capital ships before being detected. The A-wing uses Novaldex J-77 "Event Horizon" engines, which are efficient and deliver considerable thrust. Although relatively weak offensively, with only twin laser cannons, A-wings have been known to fire concussion missiles, and should therefore be considered a moderate long-range threat. We have an interest in capturing an A-wing for further study.

The B-wing is a new attempt at creating a heavy fighter. The Rebels, in their desperation, have adopted it to their purposes. B-wings are heavily armed, but slow and prone to breakdowns. Still, their firepower is excessive, and Imperial pilots are advised to use their superior speed and maneuverablilty to defeat a B-wing — not attempt to out-gun one. In addition to heavy weaponry, B-wings are well-shielded.

X-wing

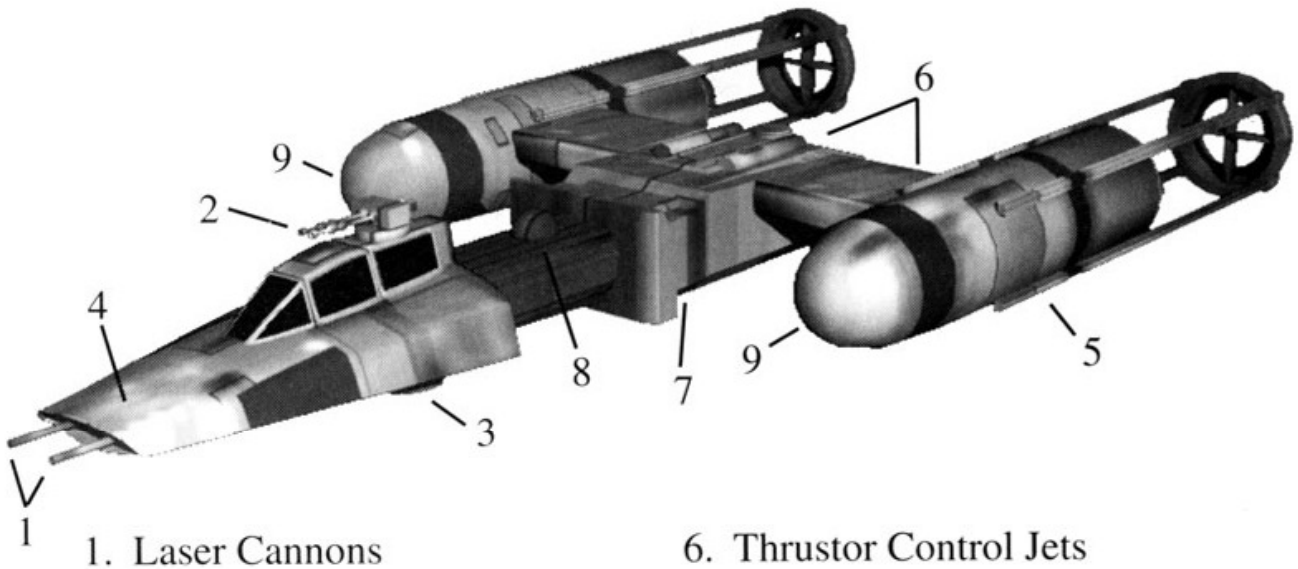
Name/Model#	T-65C A2 X-wing
Designer/Manufacturer:	Incom
Combat Designation:	Space Superiority Fighter
Crew:	1 pilot plus 1 Astromech Droid
Power System:	Novaldex O4-Z cryogenic power cells and ionization reactor
Propulsion System:	Four Incom 4j.4 fusial thrust engines (rated at 300 KTU)
Speed Rating:	100 MGLT
Flight Control System:	Torplex Rq8.Y flight control avionics package
Maneuverability Rating:	75 DPF
Navigation:	Astromech Droid, usually R2 unit
Hyperdrive:	Incom GBk-585 motivator drive unit
Sensor Systems:	Fabritech ANS-5d unit with a long range Phased Tachyon Detection Array model# PA-9r and one short range Primary Threat Analysis Grid model# PG-7u
Targeting Computer:	Fabritech ANq 3.6 tracking computer and IN-344-B "Sightline" holographic imaging system
Weapons:	Four Taim & Bak IX4 Laser Cannons (single fire or fire-linked) Two Krupx MG7 Proton Torpedo Launchers (3 torpedoes each)
Shields/Armor:	Forward/Rear Projecting Chempat Shields (rated at 50 SBD) Titanium Alloy Hull (rated at 20 RU)
Special Design Features:	S Foil Wings, adjustable for atmospheric flight



1. Sensor Systems
2. Proton Torpedo Launchers
3. Fusial Thrust Engine Assembly
4. Laser Cannon
5. S Foil Wing
6. Shield Projector
7. R2 Unit
8. Thrustor Control Jets (trailing edge of wing)

Y-wing

Name/Model#	BTL-A4 Y-wing Starfighter
Designer/Manufacturer:	Koensayr
Combat Designation:	Long Range Fighter/Bomber
Crew:	1 pilot plus 1 Astromech Droid
Power Systems:	Thiodyne O3-R cryogenic power cells and ionization reactor
Propulsion System:	Two Koensayr R200 ion fission engines (rated at 250 KTU)
Speed Rating:	80 MGLT
Flight Control System:	Subpro NH-7 flight control avionics package
Maneuverability Rating:	50 DPF
Navigation:	Astromech Droid, usually R2 unit
Hyperdrive:	Koensayr R300-H motivator drive unit
Sensor Systems:	Fabritech ANs-5d unit with one long range Phased Tachyon Detection Array model# PA-9r and one short range Primary Threat Analysis Grid model# PG-7u
Targeting Computer:	Fabritech ANc-2.7 tracking computer and SI 5g7 "Quickscan" vector imaging system
Weapons:	Two Taim & Bak KX5 Laser Cannons (single fire or fire-linked) Two ArMek SW-4 Ion Cannons (single fire or fire-linked) Two Arakyd Flex Tube Proton Torpedo Launchers (4 torpedoes each)
Shields/Armor:	Forward/Rear Projecting Chempat Shields (rated at 75 SBD) Titanium reinforced Alusteel Alloy Hull (rated at 40 RU)

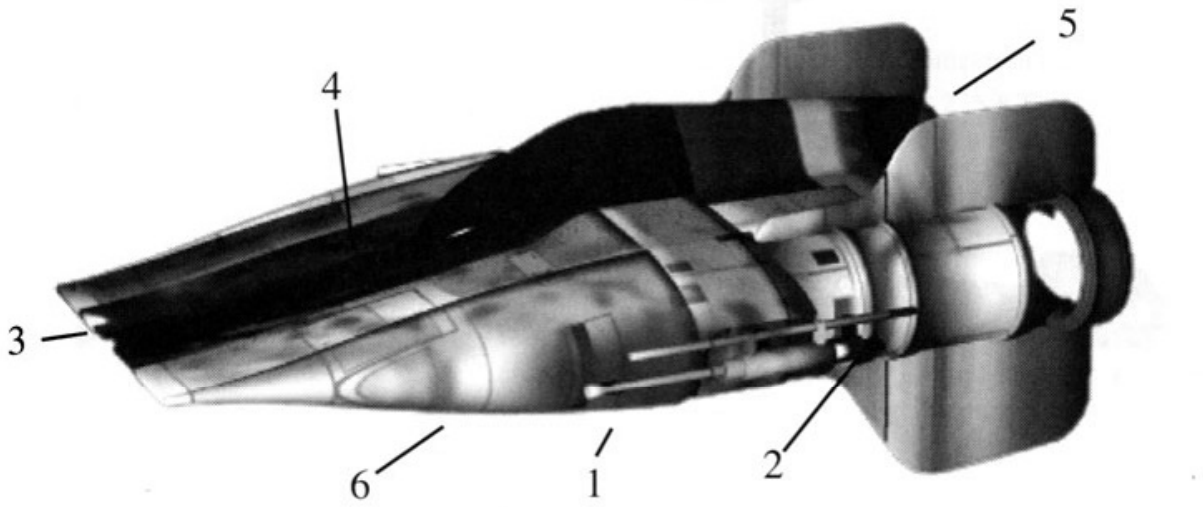


1. Laser Cannons
2. Ion Cannons
3. Proton Torpedo Launcher
4. Computer Targeting System
5. Ion Fission Engines
6. Thrustor Control Jets
7. Thiodyne Power System
8. R2 Unit
9. Sensor System

A-wing

Name/Model#	RZ-1 A-wing Starfighter
Designer/Manufacturer:	Dodonna/Blissex
Combat Designation:	Long Range Fighter/Interceptor
Crew:	1 pilot
Power System:	MPS BPr-99 power convertor and fusion reactor
Propulsion Engines:	Twin Novaldex J-77 "Event Horizon" engines (rated at 400 KTU)*
Speed Rating:	120 MGLT*
Flight Control System:	Torplex Rq9.Z advanced flight control avionics package
Maneuverability Rating:	100 DPF*
Navigation:	Microaxial LpL-449 computer system
Hyperdrive:	Incom GBk-785 motivator drive unit
Sensor Systems:	Fabritech ANs-7e unit with one Phased Tachyon Detection Array model# PA-9r and one short range Primary Threat Analysis Grid model# PG-7u
Targeting Computer:	Fabritech ANq 3.6 tracking computer and IN-344-B "Sightline" holographic imaging system
Weapons:	Two Borstel RG9 Laser Cannons (single fire or fire-linked) Two Dymek HM-6 Concussion Missile Launchers (6 missiles each)
Shields/Armor:	Forward/Rear Projecting Sirplex Z-9 Shields (rated at 50 SBD) Titanium alloy hull (rated at 15 RU)

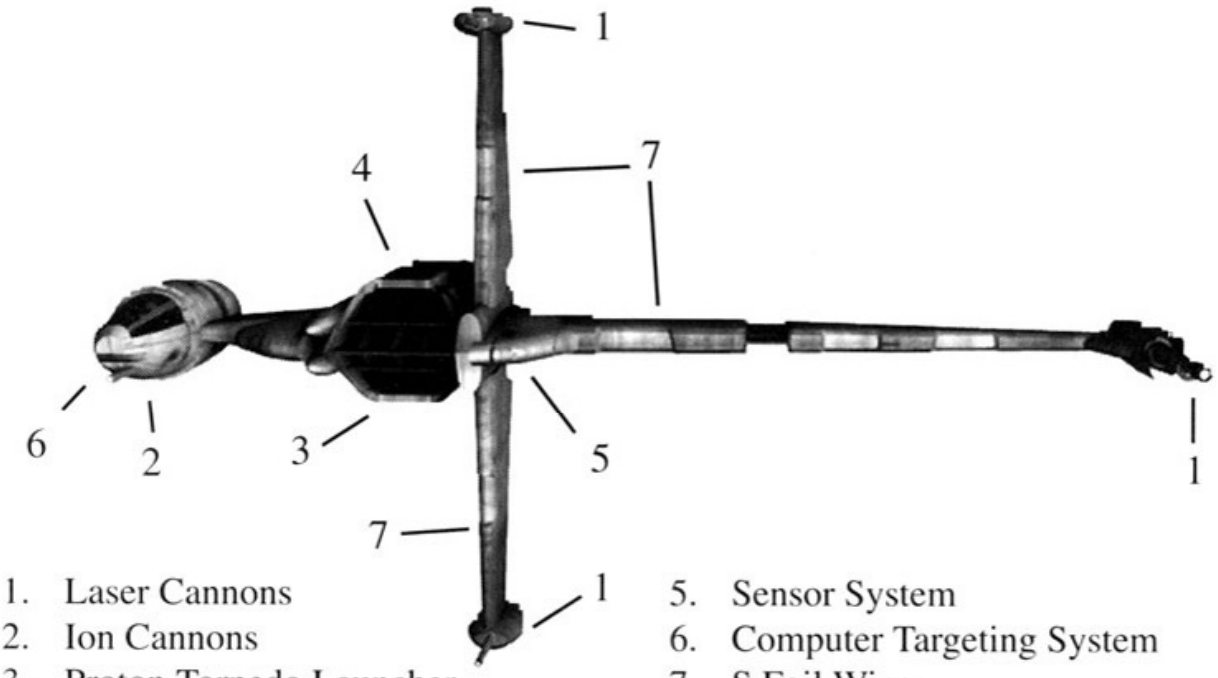
* *This information is highly suspect. Other information is best guess based on remote telemetry, pilot debriefings, and incomplete field operative reports.*



1. Laser Cannon
2. Novaldex Engine
3. Sensor System (?)
4. Fabritech Targeting Computer
5. Thrustor Control Jets
6. Concussion Missile Launcher (ventral mounting)

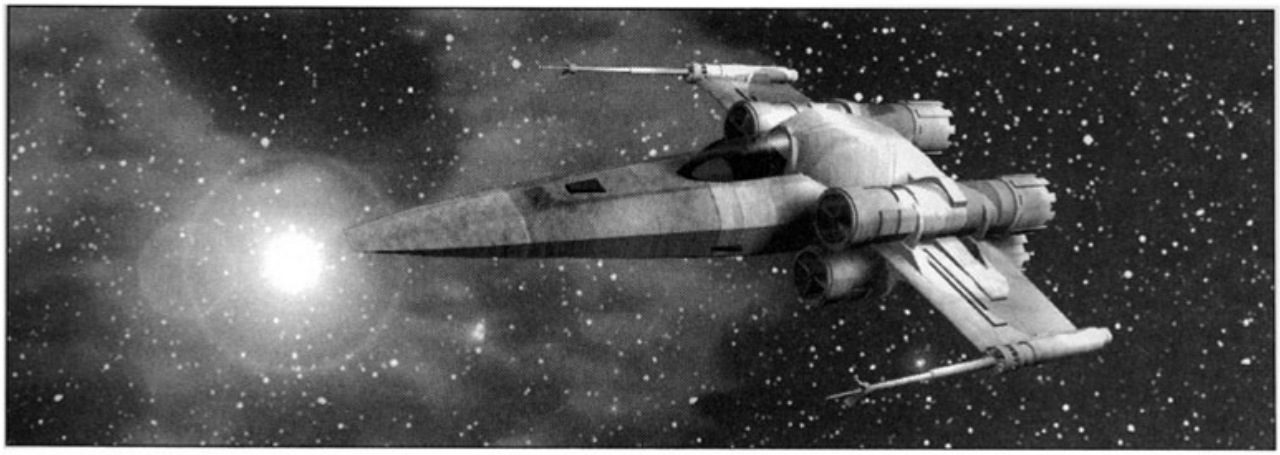
B-wing

Name/Model#	B-wing
Designer/Manufacturer:	Slayn & Korpil
Combat Designation:	Heavy assault starfighter
Crew:	1 pilot
Power System:	Vinop O2 K cryogenic power cells and ionization reactor
Propulsion Engines:	Four Slayn & Korpil JZ-5 fusial thrust engines (rated at 290 KTU)
Speed Rating:	90 MGLT
Flight Control System:	Narmox HG.6w flight control avionics package
Maneuverability Rating:	65 DPF
Navigation:	Microaxial LpM-549 computer system
Hyperdrive:	Slayn & Korpil HYd-997 motivator drive unit
Sensor Systems:	Fabritech ANv-9q unit with one Phased Tachyon Detection Array model# PH-5s and one short range Primary Threat Analysis Grid model# PK-8f
Targeting Computer:	Fabritech ANq 3.6 tracking computer and IN-344-B "Sightline" holographic imaging system
Weapons:	Three Gyrhil R-9X Laser Cannons (single fire or fire-linked) Three ArMek SW-7a Ion Cannons (single fire or fire-linked) Two Krupx MG9 Proton Torpedo Launchers (6 torpedoes each)
Shields/Armor:	Forward/Rear Projecting Sirplex Zr-41 Shields (rated at 125 SBD) Titanium alloy hull (rated at 60 RU)
Special Design Features:	S Foil wings, adjustable for atmospheric flight



1. Laser Cannons
2. Ion Cannons
3. Proton Torpedo Launcher
4. Engine
5. Sensor System
6. Computer Targeting System
7. S Foil Wing

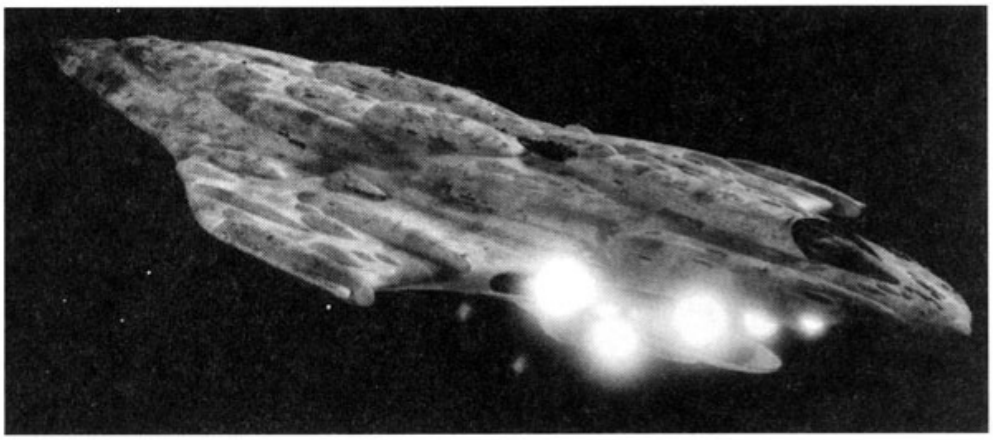
Z-95 Headhunter



Although outmoded and outclassed by every other starfighter in the galaxy, the Z-95 still remains in service among the Rebels as well as with numerous pirates and other criminal elements. This durability can only be explained by the Z-95 Headhunter's structural toughness, easy availability, and low maintenance needs. So many Headhunters were manufactured by Incom and Subpro over several decades that our statisticians estimate more Z-95s are actually still in service than any other starfighter, with the possible exception of the standard TIE fighter. Presumably, the traitors at Incom used the Z-95 as the initial model for the hated X-wing starfighter.

Name/Model#	Z-95 Headhunter
Designer/Manufacturer:	Incom/Subpro
Combat Designation:	Starfighter
Crew:	1
Power System:	Novaldex O3-R cryogenic powercells & ionization reactor
Propulsion Engines:	Four Incom 2a ion fission engines (rated at 275 KTU)
Speed Rating:	85 MGLT
Flight Control System:	Vudyne CF-30 flight control avionics package
Maneuverability Rating:	60 DPF
Navigation:	Narmox Zr-390 computer system
Hyperdrive:	Incom Gbk-435 motivator drive unit
Sensor Systems:	Fabritech ANS-5c unit with long-range Phased Tachyon Detection Array model# PA-9r and one short-range Primary Threat Analysis Grid model# PG-7u
Targeting Computer:	Fabritech ANq 2.4 tracking computer and SI 5g8 "Quickscan" vector imaging system
Weapons:	Two Taim & Bak KX5 Laser Cannons (single fire or fire-linked) Two Krupx MG5 Concussion Missile Launchers (4 torpedoes each)
Shields/Armor:	Forward/Rear Projecting XoLyyn Shields (rated at 20 SBD) Titanium alloy hull (rated at 15 RU)

Mon Calamari Cruiser



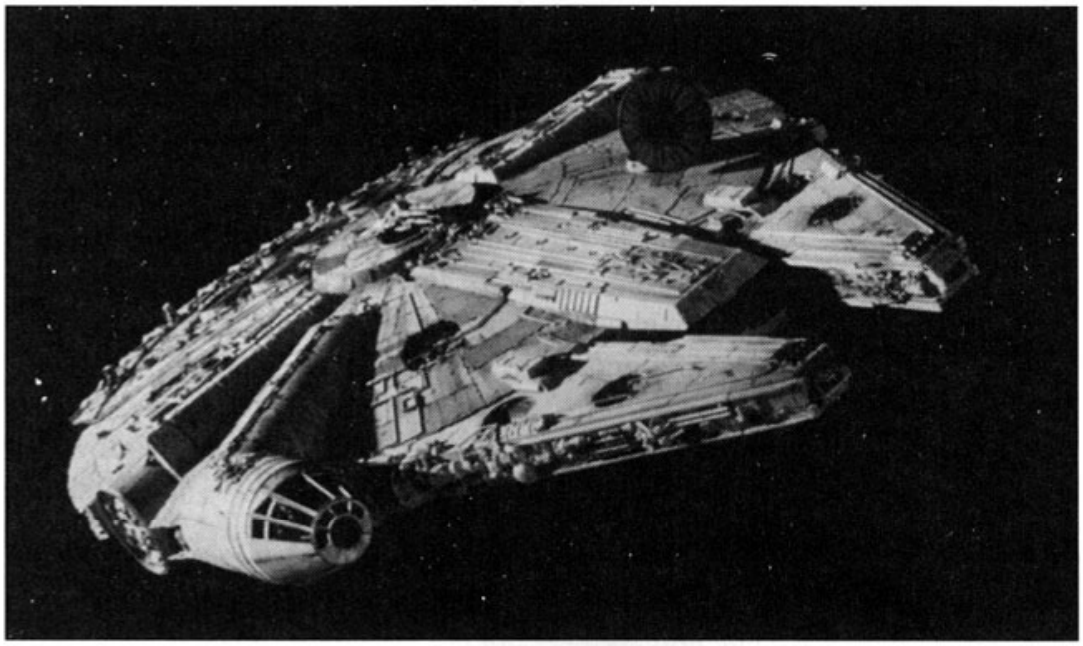
Those vile-smelling creatures of that drenched planet Mon Calamari have turned their eccentric talents to the other side. How they can build effective starships when they appear to have no plans or specifications is beyond the scope of this document to answer. However, it remains true that they have refitted many of their decadent luxury vehicles to the purposes of the enemy.

Their largest vehicle, designated the MC80 Star Cruiser, is an organically-shaped monstrosity, something like a pickle to our observers. Unfortunately the laughter stops when the MC80 opens fire with its 48 turbolaser batteries and 20 ion cannons. This is a spacecraft that can actually challenge a Star Destroyer! Not that it would defeat our mighty craft, but it could do significant damage.

Mon Calamari vehicles are difficult to defeat. They are made with many redundant systems, so they do not cripple easily. They can also carry with them a large crew of soldiers and serve as a base for several squadrons of starfighters. Finally, they are crewed by the bizarre combination of Calamarians and Quarren, whom our Imperial Navy experts must reluctantly acknowledge as superior spacefarers. Their handling of the ships of their fleet has added significantly to the Rebels' cause. We recommend the total annihilation of Mon Calamari as soon as operations permit such an endeavor.

Name/Model#	MC80a
Designer/Manufacturer:	Mon Calamari
Combat Designation:	Capital Starship
Length:	1200 meters
Crew:	5,402 (668 officers, 4734 enlisted)
Weapons:	48 Taim & Bak XV9 Turbolasers (computer assisted targeting) 20 ArMek SW-7 Ion Batteries Six Phylon-Q7 Tractor Beam Projectors
Starfighter Squadrons:	2 X-wing, 3 Y-wing, 1 A-wing

Corellian Transport



The Corellian-built stock light freighter, or Corellian YT-1300 Transport, is one of the most common small trading craft in the galaxy. Once, the YT-1300 was the most common freight and commerce vessel, but in recent years many trading firms have begun to employ the bulk freighters and container ships, which carry far more cargo more efficiently.

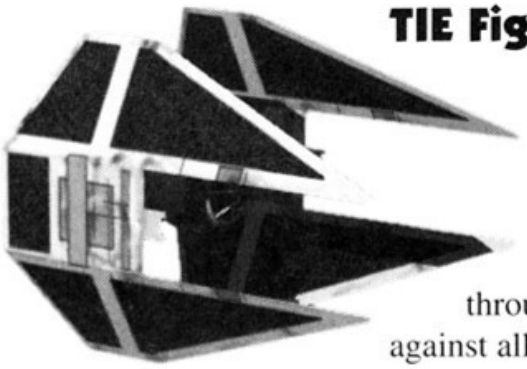
Corellian transports come in many forms, but all are relatively small, uncomfortable, and quirky to run. Despite this fact, many small traders, mostly in the Outer Rim, swear by them and would not give them up willingly.

The most notorious of the Corellian transports belongs to a smuggler and Rebel sympathizer, Han Solo. Our sources indicate that the *Millennium Falcon* has been modified repeatedly until it is capable of outrunning starfighters, and there are several reports to that effect. Whether this is true or not, it is clear that many criminals and Rebel riff raff still use the Corellian transport to haul their ill-gotten goods.

Name/Model#	Corellian YT-1300 Transport
Designer/Manufacturer:	Corellian Engineering Corporation
Designation:	Stock Light Freighter
Length:	27 meters
Crew:	2
Weapons:	1 Taim & Bak H4 Laser Cannon

Imperial Vessels

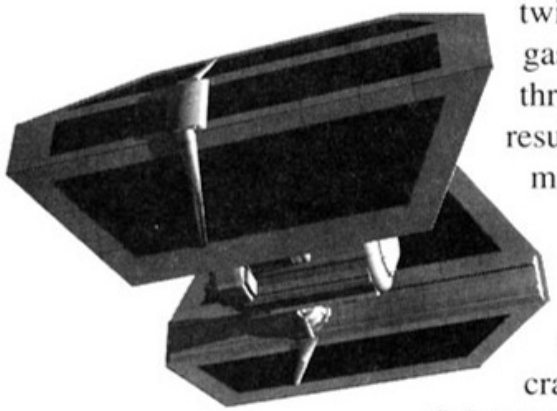
TIE Fighters



The Twin Ion Engine (TIE) fighter is the primary starfighter of the Empire. There are several models of TIE starfighter currently in service throughout the Imperium. No single starfighter is as well represented throughout the galaxy, and our TIE fighters perform well against all opposition.

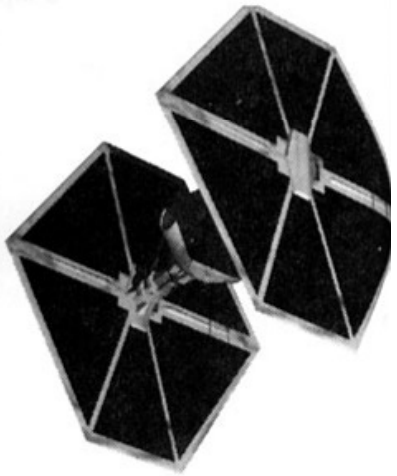
All TIE fighters are manufactured by Sienar Fleet Systems (SFS), formerly known as Republic Sienar Systems. SFS has produced TIE fighters in enormous quantities, though their output has recently fallen off as resources are diverted to top secret projects outside the scope of this document.

Propulsion



Propulsion systems in all TIE fighters are the same, using twin ion engines. Using microparticle accelerators, ionized gasses are excited to near lightspeed. When released through the adjustable rear vents of the TIE fighter, the resultant thrust produces a fast-moving, highly maneuverable craft. Extremely efficient mass-to-energy conversion and the addition of the distinctive solar panels allow the TIE fighter to carry unlimited fuel supplies. Since TIE fighters do not have hyperspace capability, they rarely venture far from their mother craft. Hyperdrives would affect the performance of the TIE fighter as well as cost the Imperial treasury a considerable sum due to the vast numbers of TIE fighters in service.

Maneuverability

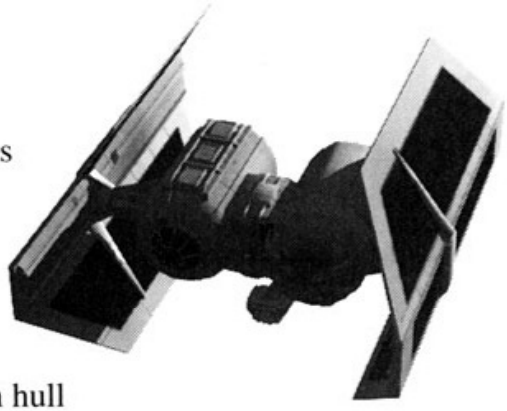


Ion streams can be directed in almost any direction, making the TIE fighter highly maneuverable. Once a pilot has mastered the craft, he can perform complex rolls and spins as well as slip-and-drift maneuvers that can lose all but the most determined of pursuers. Some maneuvers place great strain on the spacecraft, however, and it is not advisable to come to a 180-degree, full-thrust stop as severe damage may result.

Weapons Systems

Standard armament on the TIE fighter consists of twin laser cannons mounted in the spherical shell of the spacecraft. Originally these cannons were powered by the ion engines, but during battle the starfighter's performance would suffer, so separate power batteries were later installed, making the lasers even more powerful without substantially reducing the performance of the TIE fighter. Some models of the TIE fighter have different armament configurations.

Shields



One dangerous weakness of the TIE series of fighters is its lack of deflector shields. When going up against the shielded Rebel craft such as the X-wing and Y-wing fighters, an individual TIE fighter can be at a disadvantage. Although we make up for this problem with sheer numbers and superior tactics, our armored solar panels and main hull rarely provide much protection against a direct laser hit, let alone a concussion missile. This problem is being rectified slowly with the development of new starfighter models such as the TIE Advanced.

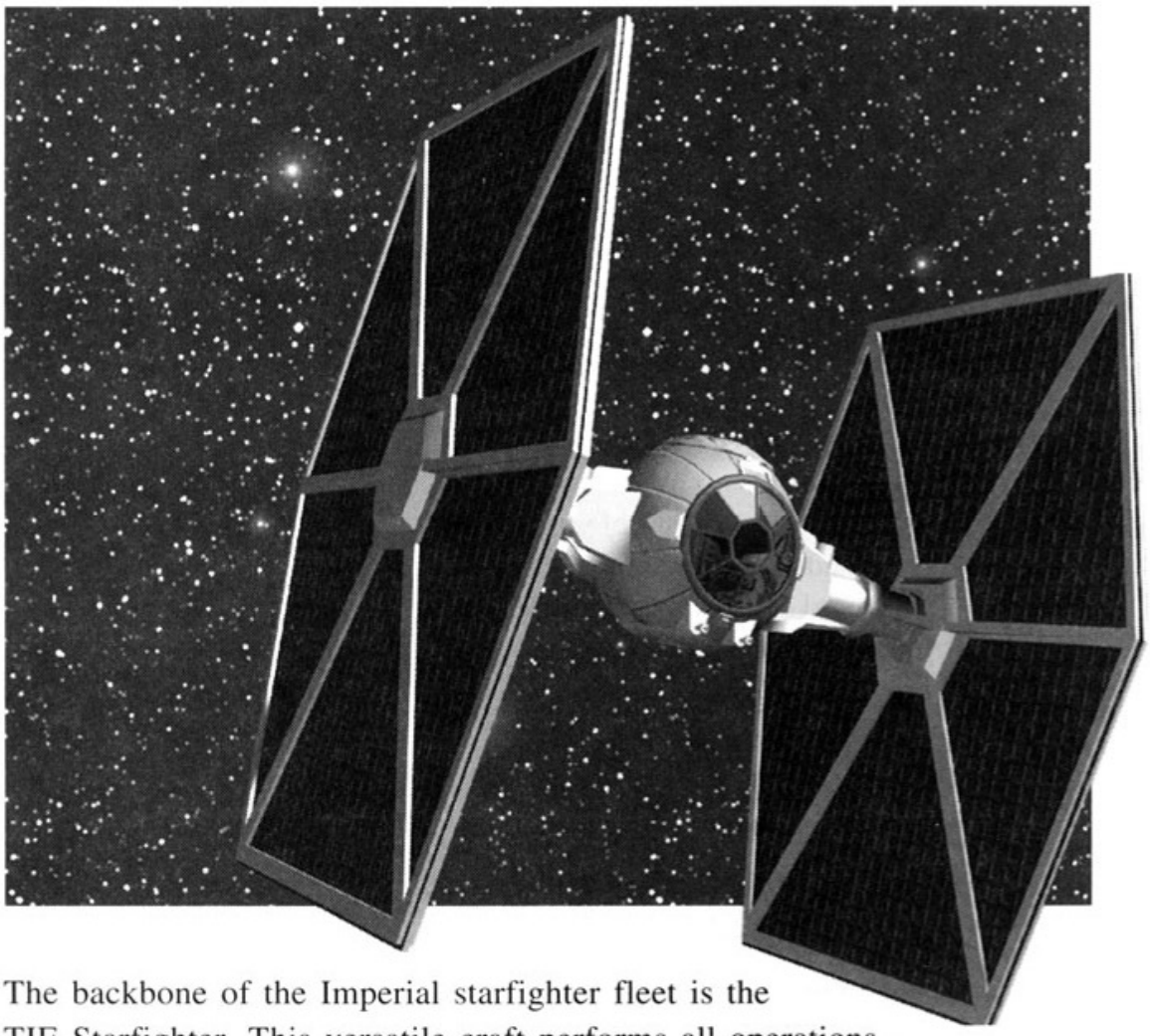


TIE Starfighter Models



There are several TIE fighters in service. Some are only specialized variants of the most common model, the TIE Starfighter. Others are redesigned and rebuilt for specific purposes. For instance, the TIE/rc is a lightly-armed version used for reconnaissance missions. The TIE/fc is used as a long-range fire control and target acquisition craft to help direct more accurate long-range bombardment missions. The TIE/gt is a retrofitted TIE Starfighter used for carrying missiles and bombs, but is largely giving way to the new TIE Bomber which features a secondary hull used for carrying armaments. For many years, the TIE Interceptor was arguably the fastest fighter in galactic space, though the Rebel A-wing presented real challenges. Now, our engineers have developed the TIE Advanced, based on improvements suggested by Lord Darth Vader. The TIE Advanced is a superior starfighter which features a shield array and long-range twin ion engines. We have also introduced the Assault Gunboat, not technically a TIE fighter, but a formidable weapons platform with strong shields and hull for breaching enemy defenses. And there are some rumors that even greater starfighters are in development. More on that in our next update.

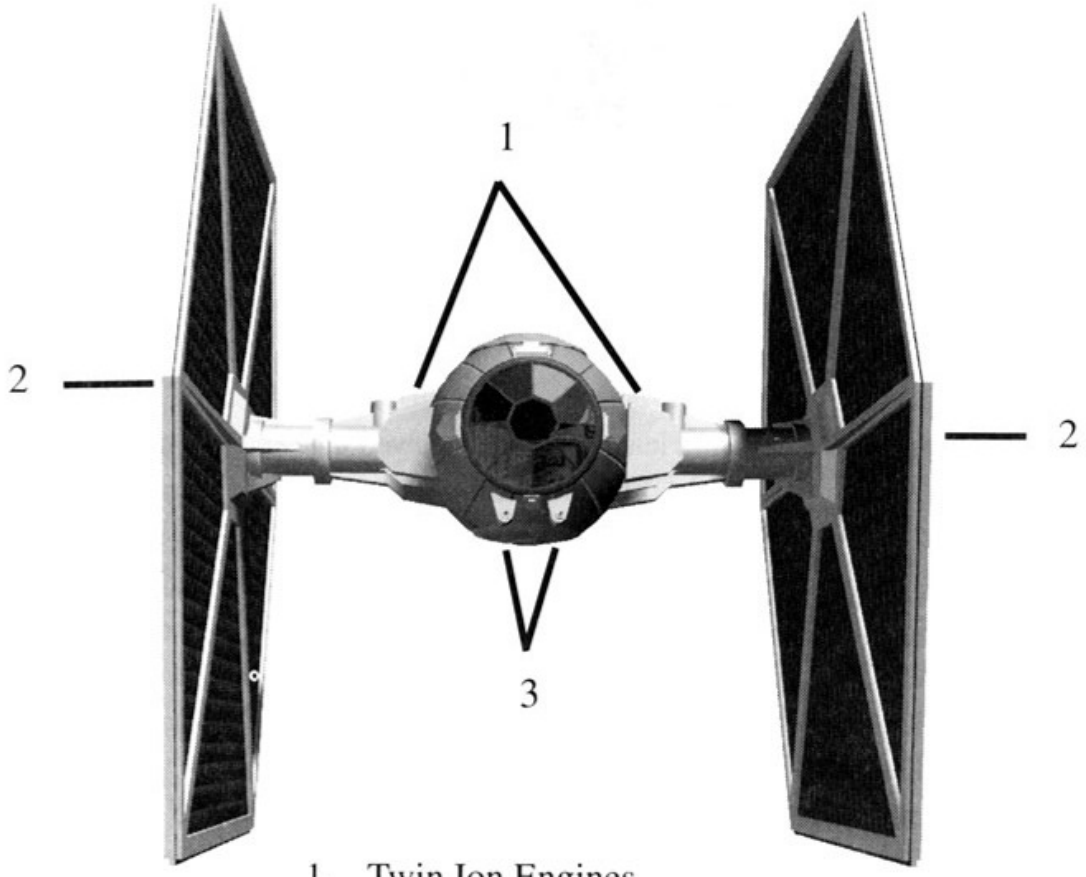
TIE Starfighter



The backbone of the Imperial starfighter fleet is the TIE Starfighter. This versatile craft performs all operations including fleet escort, reconnaissance, space patrol, planetary guard, and hunter/destroyer. Pilots of the TIE Starfighter enjoy a speed and maneuverability advantage over almost any spacecraft currently in operation, although recent advances by the Rebels have brought them close, or even superior to, the TIE.

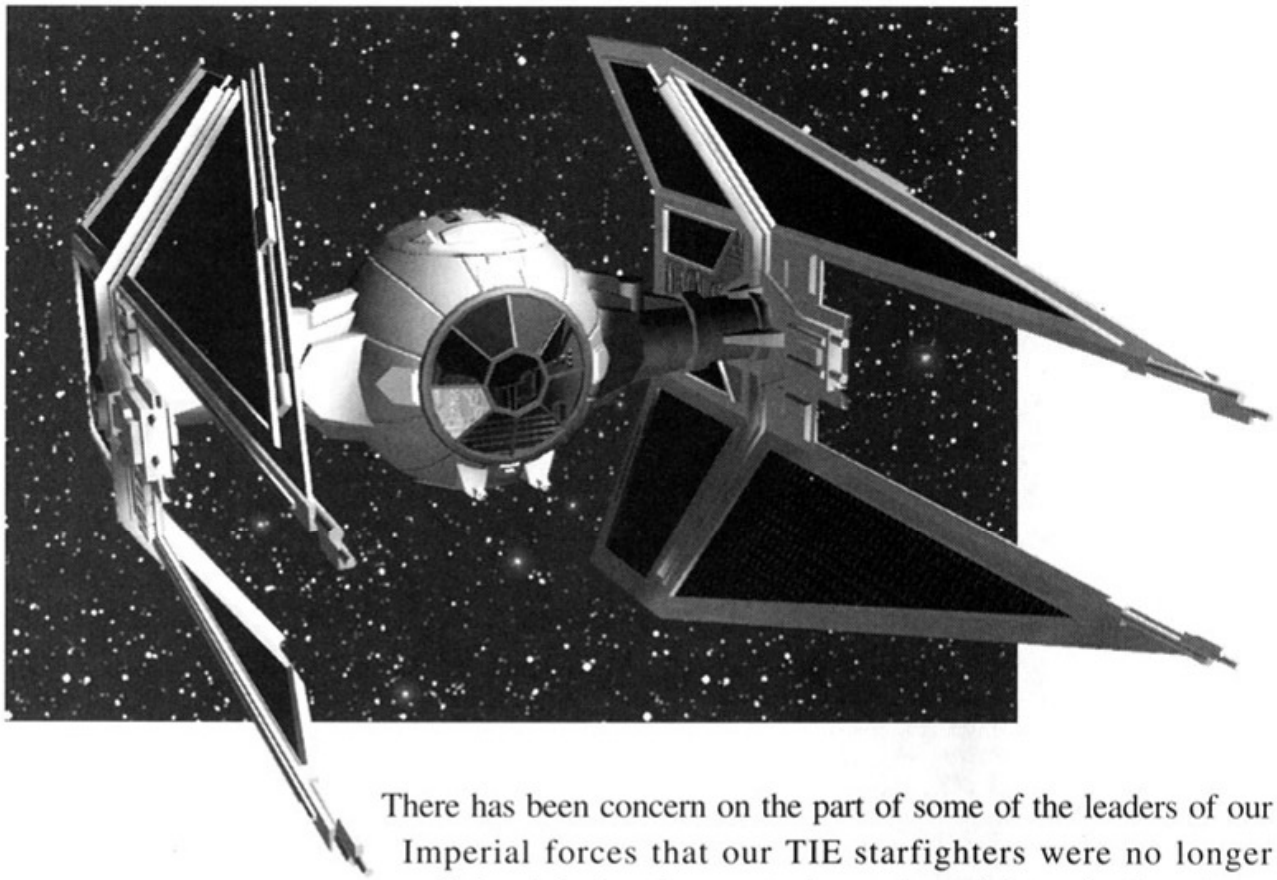
The TIE Starfighter matches well with the Rebel X-wing and shows some superiority to the Y-wing. However, Rebel starfighters support more weaponry and have deflector shields, making them dangerous foes in one-on-one combat. Fortunately, our TIEs generally enjoy superiority of numbers, making even the most talented and stubborn of Rebel pilots run away and jump to hyperspace to escape.

Name/Model#	TIE Starfighter
Designer/Manufacturer:	Sienar Fleet Systems
Combat Designation:	Space Superiority Fighter
Crew:	1 pilot
Power System:	SFS I-a2b solar ionization reactor
Propulsion System:	SFS P-s4 Twin ion engines (rated at 150 KTU)
Speed Rating:	100 MGLT
Flight Control System:	SFS F-s3.2 flight avionics system
Maneuverability Rating:	100 DPF
Navigation:	SFS N-s6 Navcon computer system
Hyperdrive:	none
Weapons:	Two SFS L-s1 Laser Cannons (single or fire-linked)
Shields/Armor:	No shields; Titanium hull with Quadanium Steel armored Solar Panels (rated 15 RU)



1. Twin Ion Engines
2. Solar Panels
3. Laser Cannons

TIE Interceptor



There has been concern on the part of some of the leaders of our Imperial forces that our TIE starfighters were no longer distinguished as the most advanced starfighters in the galaxy. The rabble of the Alliance have managed, with the help of the Incom traitors and other sympathizers, to create a highly versatile and dangerous series of starfighters, led most notably by the X-wing. Therefore, the Imperial leaders have conceived a new starfighter, based on the TIE designs, but faster, more powerful, and even more maneuverable. This new craft is the TIE Interceptor.

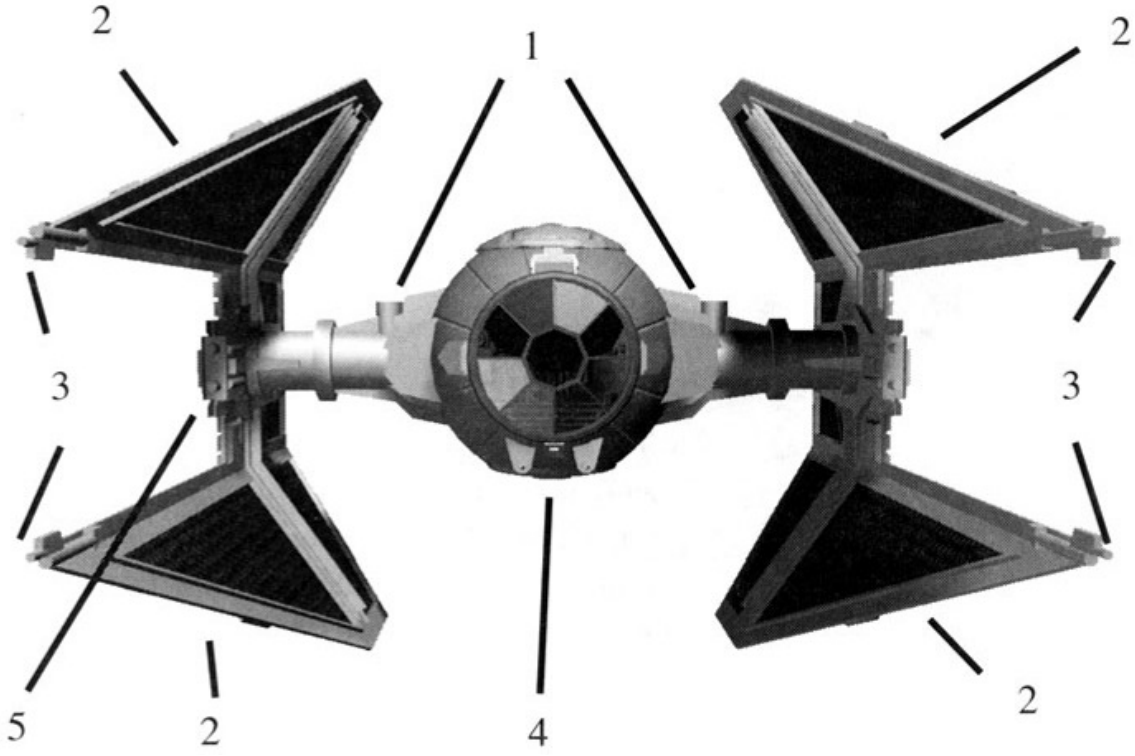
The TIE Interceptor is based on the custom bent-wing TIE fighter designed by Lord Darth Vader. Its twin ion engines have been enlarged with added power coming from the greater surface area of the solar panels. At this time, the TIE Interceptor is the fastest starfighter in existence. Some claim that the Rebel A-wing is faster, but no evidence exists to confirm or deny that claim.

Visibility problems with the oversized solar panels are solved by the dagger shape of the front panels, and firepower has been increased by the addition of four laser cannons mounted in the fronts of the solar panels, at the points of the "daggers." The twin chin-mounted cannons have been removed from the fuselage. To improve accuracy, the targeting software for the weapons guidance systems has also been updated.

Imperial Technical Starship Report

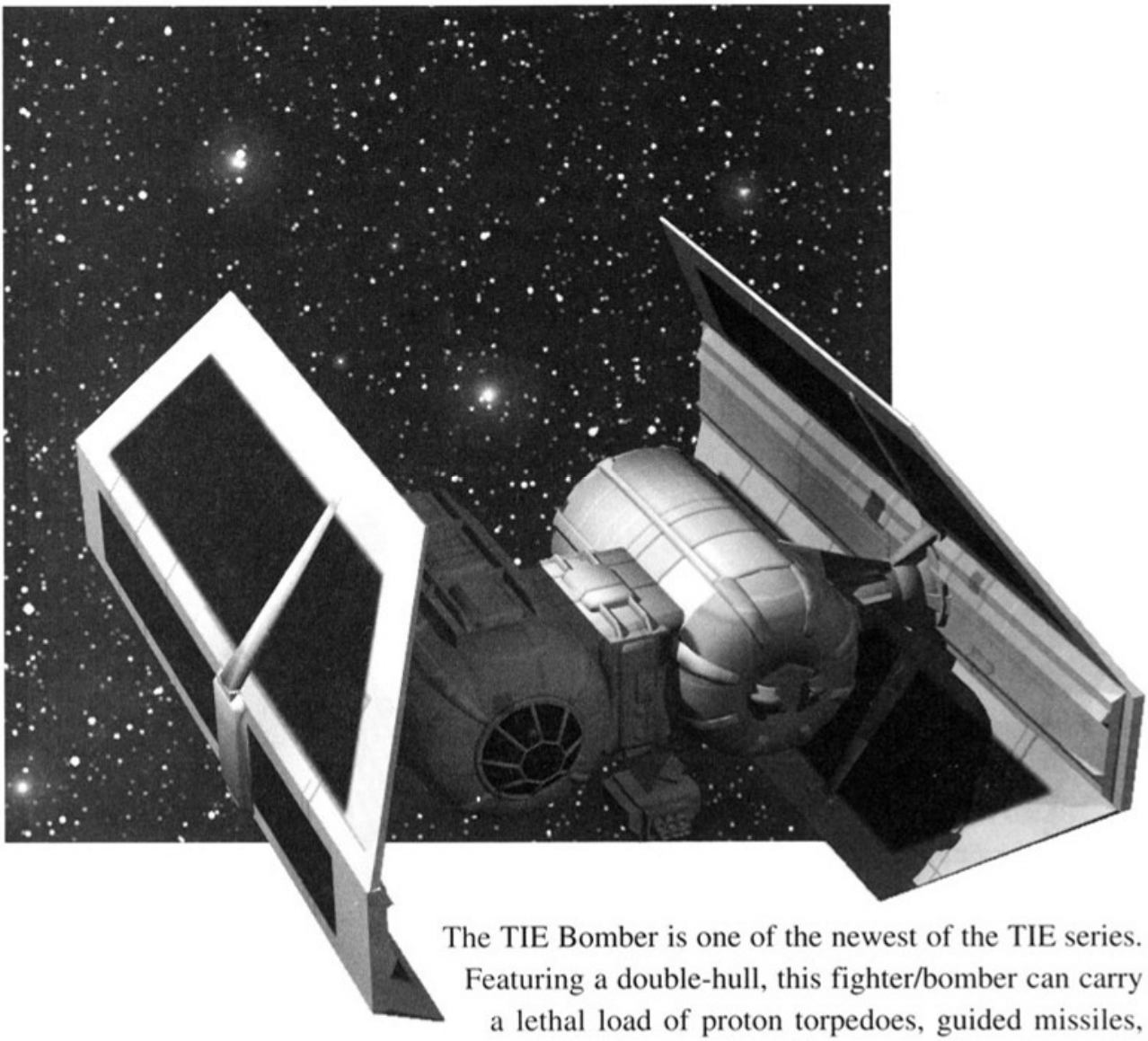


Name/Model#	TIE Interceptor
Designer/Manufacturer:	Sienar Fleet Systems
Combat Designation:	Space Superiority Fighter
Crew:	1 pilot
Power System:	SFS I-s3a solar ionization reactor
Propulsion System:	SFS P-s5.6 Twin ion engines (rated at 175 KTU)
Speed Rating:	110 MGLT
Flight Control System:	SFS F-s4 flight avionics system
Maneuverability Rating:	125 DPF
Navigation:	SFS N-s6 Navcon computer system
Hyperdrive:	none
Weapons:	Four SFS L-s9.3 Laser Cannons (single or fire-linked)
Shields/Armor:	No shields; Titanium hull with Quadanium Steel armored Solar Panels (rated 20 RU)



1. Twin Ion Engines
2. Solar Panels
3. Laser Cannons
4. Computer Targeting System
5. Sensor System

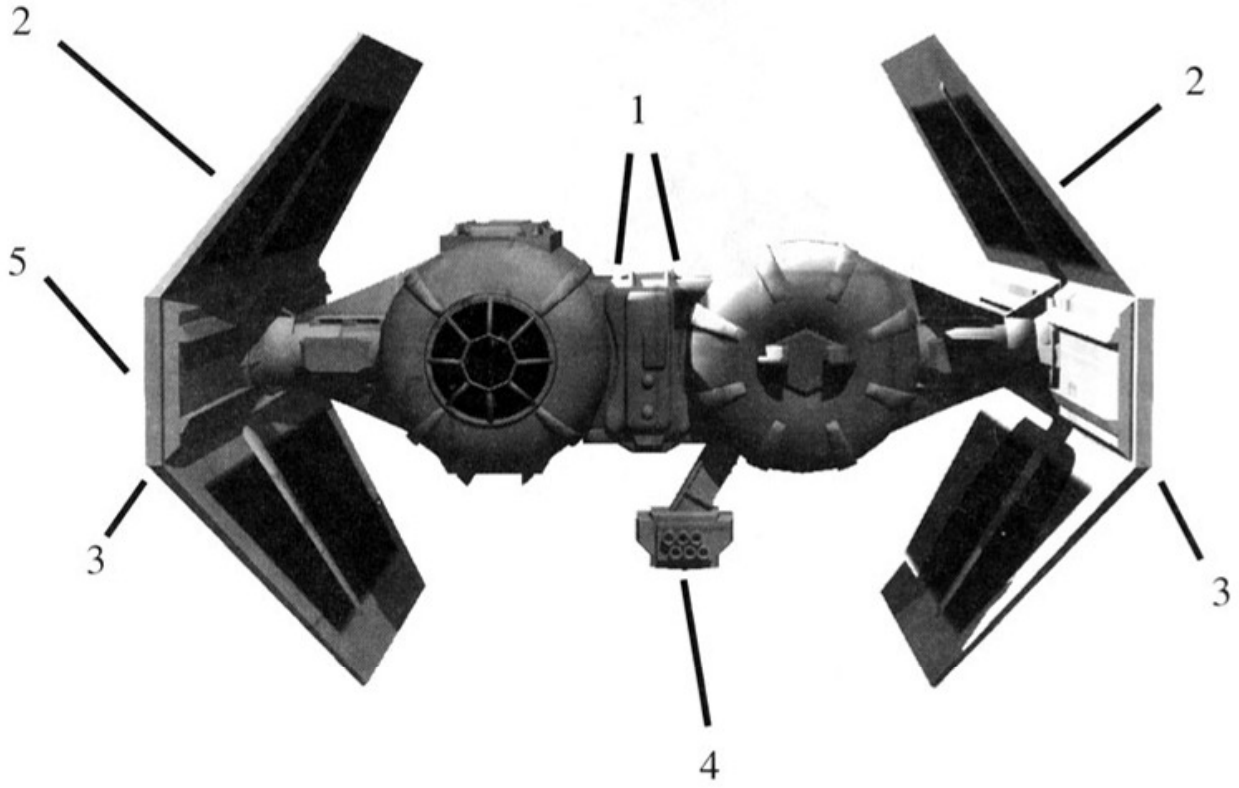
TIE Bomber



The TIE Bomber is one of the newest of the TIE series. Featuring a double-hull, this fighter/bomber can carry a lethal load of proton torpedoes, guided missiles, orbital mines, or free-falling thermal detonators.

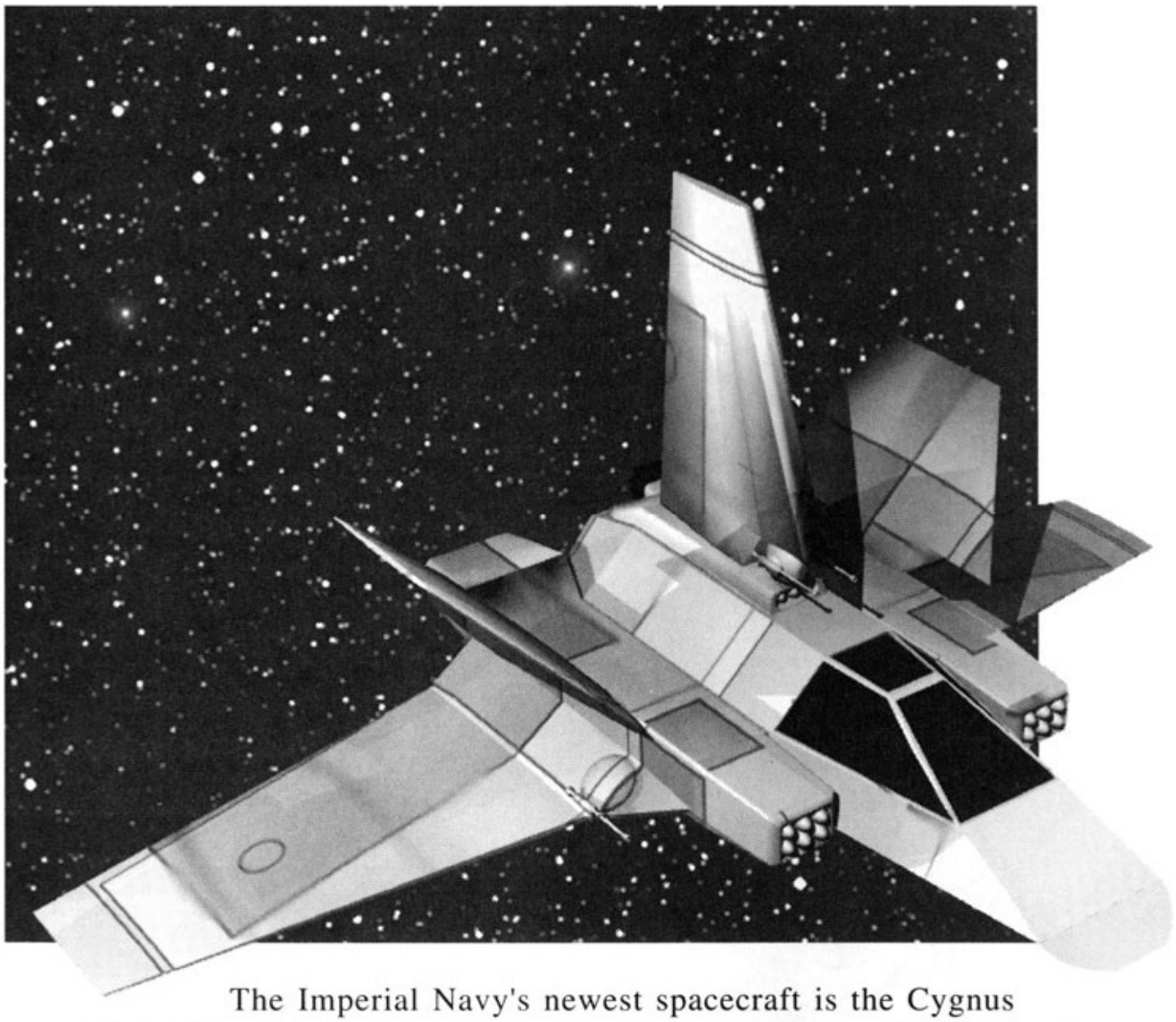
The TIE Bomber excels at surgical placement of ordinance, picking out small targets on planetary surfaces or on enemy ships. In contrast with full-scale naval bombardment which leaves only rubble behind, the TIE Bomber can selectively destroy military targets while leaving commercial or military assets untouched. With its small size and high speed, the TIE Bomber can often slip past defense systems set up to watch for larger craft.

Name/Model#	TIE Bomber
Designer/Manufacturer:	Sienar Fleet Systems
Combat Designation:	Space Bomber
Crew:	1 pilot
Power System:	SFS I-a2b solar ionization reactor
Propulsion System:	SFS P-s4 Twin ion engines (rated at 125 KTU)
Speed Rating:	80 MGLT
Flight Control System:	SFS F-s3.2 flight avionics system
Maneuverability Rating:	75 DPF
Navigation:	SFS N-s4 Navcon computer system
Hyperdrive:	none
Weapons:	Two SFS L-s1 Laser Cannons (single or fire-linked) Two SFS M-s3 Concussion Missile Launchers (4 missiles each) or Two SFS T-s5 Proton Torpedo Launchers (2 torpedoes each)
Shields/Armor:	No shields; Titanium hull with Quadanium Solar Panels (rated 50 RU)



1. Twin Ion Engines
2. Solar Panels
3. Laser Cannons
4. Computer Targeting System
5. Sensor System

Assault Gunboat

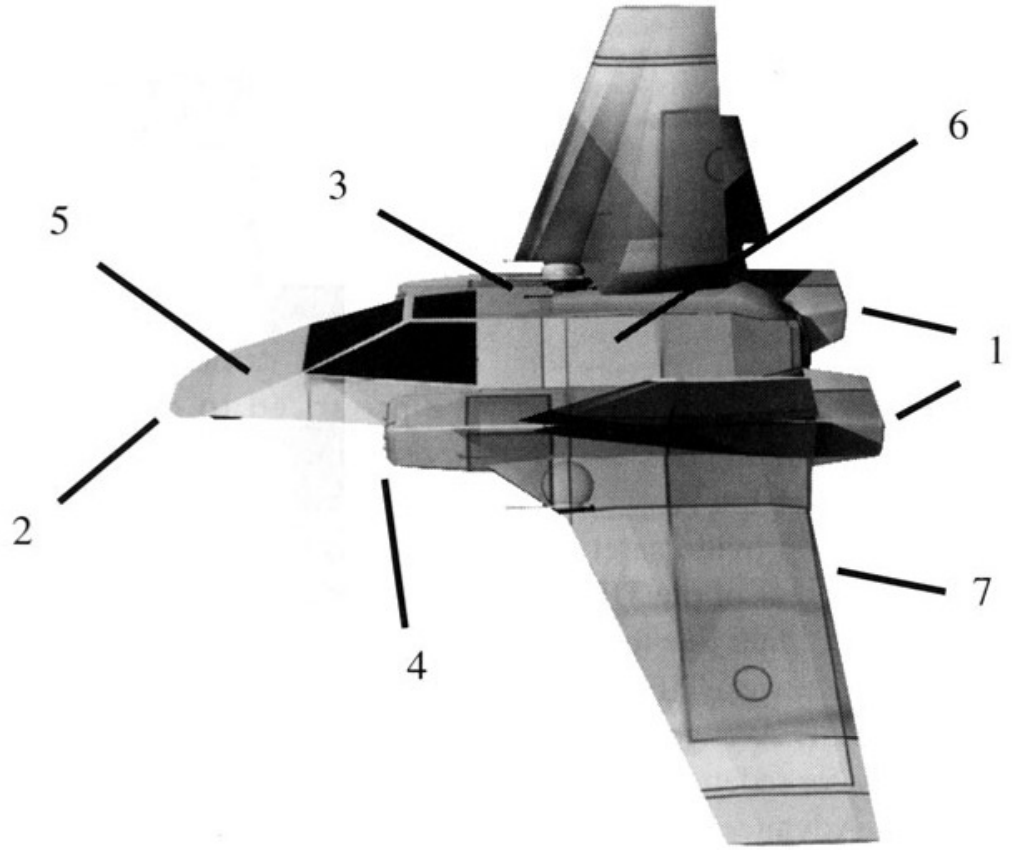


The Imperial Navy's newest spacecraft is the Cygnus Alpha Class Xg-1. After developing the beautiful Imperial Shuttle, Cygnus was awarded the contract to develop an assault vehicle, and the Xg-1 is the result. Due to its unique five-wing design, the Xg-1 is commonly known as the Star Wing. Equally at home in vacuum or atmosphere, the unique wing design can adjust to conditions, thanks in part to a revolutionary computer system from Miradyne.

The Star Wing is designed for offensive strike missions against enemy convoys and fleet craft. Its fire power and heavy shielding make it ideal for escort roles as well, and as an assault vehicle in combination with the Stormtrooper Transport, it is unmatched.

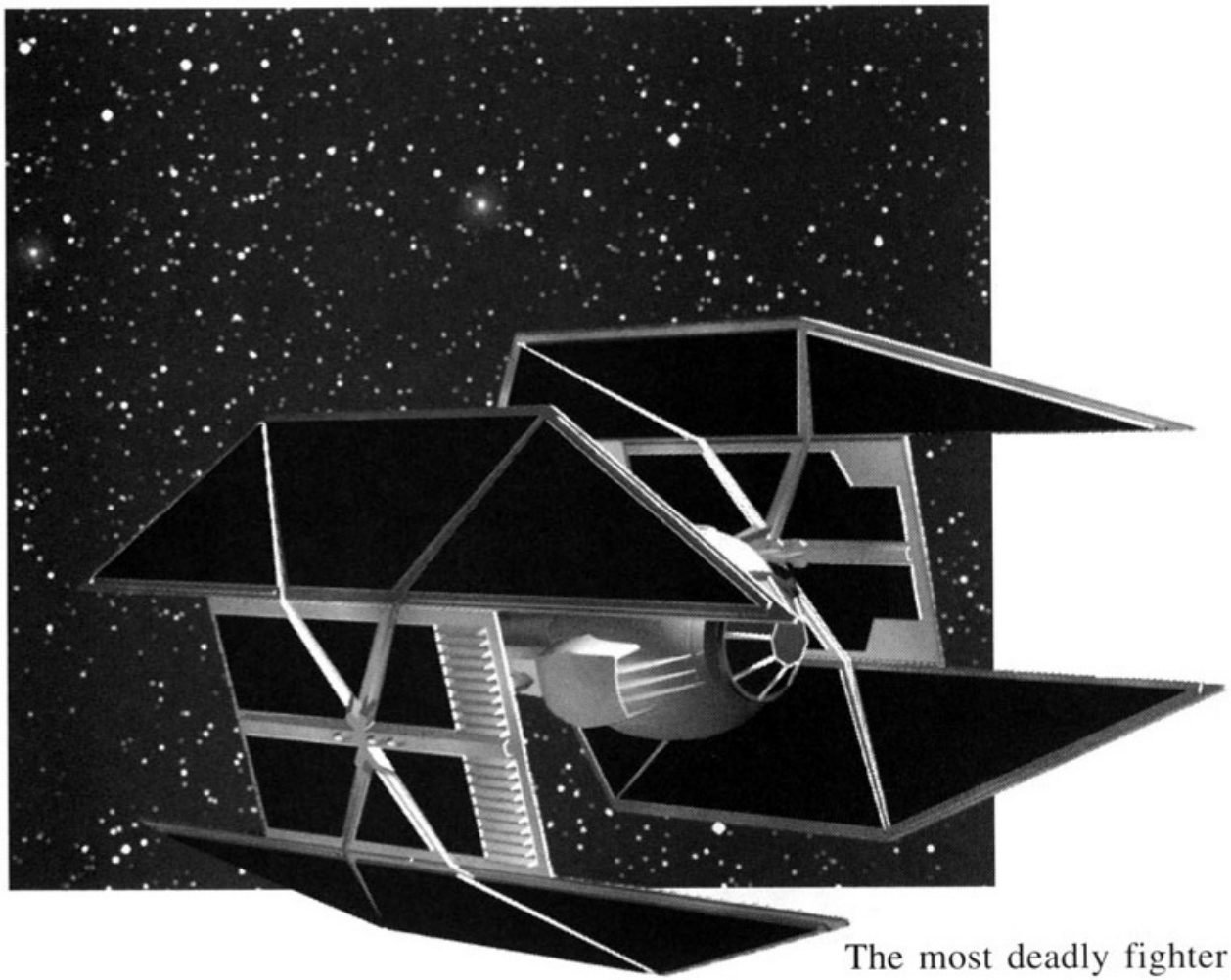
Imperial Technical Starship Report

Name/Model#	Alpha Class Xg-1 Star Wing
Designer/Manufacturer:	Cygnus Spaceworks
Combat Designation:	Assault Fighter/Gunboat
Crew:	1 pilot
Power System:	Iotek 9j ion power cells and ionization reactor
Propulsion Engines:	Cygnus 4K7 Dual Line ion engines (rated at 300 KTU)
Speed Rating:	90 MGLT
Flight Control System:	Miradyne RCS-6 flight avionics system
Maneuverability Rating:	90 DPF
Navigation:	SFS N-s8.6 Navcon computer system
Hyperdrive:	Cygnus HD7 Hyperdrive Activator Unit
Weapons:	Two Taim & Bak KX5 Laser Cannons (single fire or fire-linked) Two Borstel NK-3 Ion Cannons (single fire or fire-linked) Two SFS M-s-3 Concussion Missile Launchers (8 missiles each)
Shields/Armor:	Forward/Rear Projecting Novaldex Shields (rated at 100 SBD) Quadanium Steel armored titanium hull (rated at 50 RU)



1. Twin Ion Engines
2. Laser Cannons
3. Ion Cannons
4. Warhead Launcher
5. Targeting Computer
6. Sensor System
7. Thrustor Control Jets

TIE Advanced

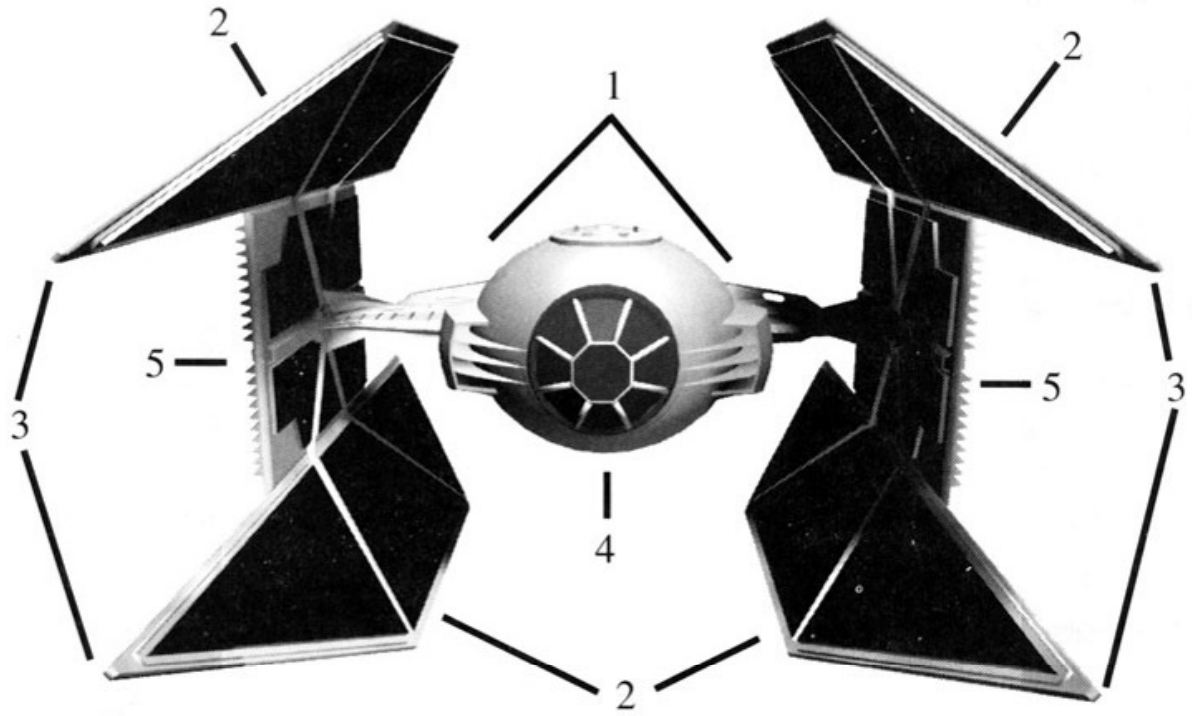


The most deadly fighter we have produced to date, the TIE Advanced is based on a design from Lord Vader. Equipped with fast-recharging shields and an extended Twin Ion Engine capacity, this new ship should out-speed the Rebel X-wing and will provide safety for its pilot within the shield array. In addition, the production models of the TIE Advanced feature a hyperdrive motivator unit — the first of the TIE fighter line to have this capability.

The superiority of this newest TIE starfighter is such that TIE pilots are already giving it the nickname "TIE Avenger," as it is widely held that the TIE Advanced represents an opportunity for redemption after the Rebels' treachery at Yavin.

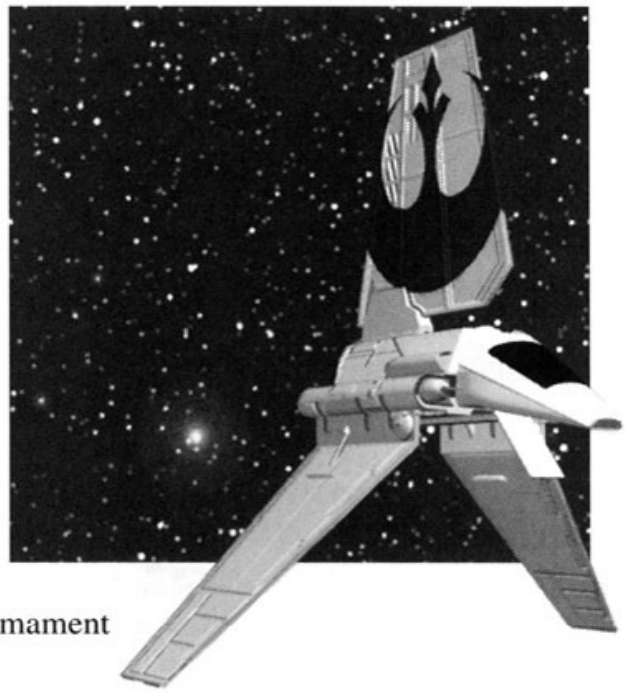
Production of TIE Advanced units has been increased due to its excellent performance in trials and selected missions.

Name/Model#	TIE/Ad
Designer/Manufacturer:	Sienar Fleet Systems
Combat Designation:	Space Superiority Fighter/Interceptor
Crew:	1 pilot
Power System:	SFS I-s3a solar ionization reactor
Propulsion System:	SFS P-sx7.4 Twin ion engines (rated at 230 KTU)
Speed Rating:	145 MGLT
Flight Control System:	SFS F-s5x flight avionics system
Maneuverability Rating:	150 DPF
Navigation:	SFS N-s6 Navcon computer system
Hyperdrive:	SFS ND9 Hyperdrive Activator Unit
Weapons:	Four SFS L-s9.3 Laser Cannons (single or fire-linked) Two SFS M-g-2 General Purpose Warhead Launchers
Shields/Armor:	Forward/Rear projecting Novaldex Shields (rated at 100 SBD) Titanium hull with Quadanium Solar Panels (rated 20 RU)



1. Twin Ion Engines
2. Solar Panels
3. Laser Cannons
4. Computer Targeting System
5. Sensor System

Tyderian Shuttle



The Tyderian Shuttle (sometimes known as the Imperial Shuttle) was designed for transporting very important personnel from one base to another. It can be used in both vacuum and atmospheric conditions and can carry as many as 14 passengers, although it often carries only one or two in more luxurious conditions.

The Tyderian Shuttle has some hyperspace capability and carries strong shields. Some models are heavily armed, while others may be almost stripped of armament and shields.

Name/Model#	*Lamda* Class T-4a "Imperial Shuttle"
Designer/Manufacturer:	Cygnus Spaceworks
Combat Designation:	Armed Government Transport Shuttle
Length:	20 meters
Crew:	4
Passengers:	1-14
Weapons:	4 Taim & Bak KX5 Laser Cannons

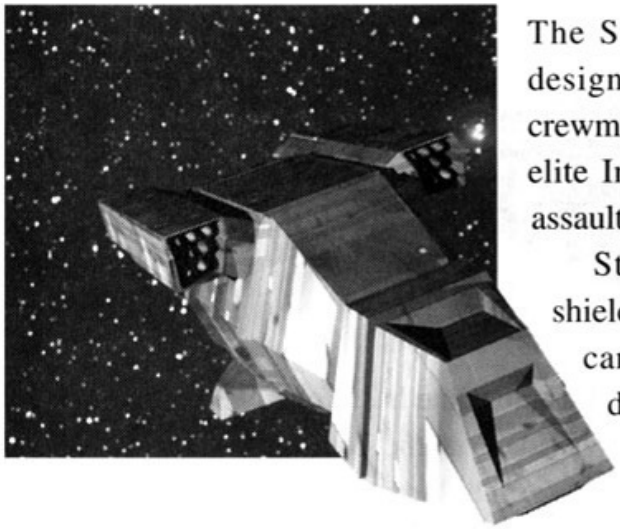
Escort Shuttle

The Delta Class JV-7 "Escort Shuttle" was designed to carry the most valuable cargo — our highest ranking officers and diplomatic personnel — through areas of extreme danger. The Escort Shuttle may also be deployed as a support craft for missions involving the Tyderian Shuttle. The most important weapon aboard the Escort Shuttle, the rear-mounted turbolaser turret, has taken many an enemy craft by surprise.

Name/Model#	Delta Class JV-7 "Escort Shuttle"
Designer/Manufacturer:	Cygnus Spaceworks
Designation:	Heavily Armed Escort Shuttle
Length:	30 meters
Crew:	6
Passengers:	10
Weapons:	3 Taim & Bak KX5 Laser Cannons 1 Taim & Baik H9 Dual Turbolaser Cannon



Stormtrooper Transport



The Stormtrooper Transport is an assault vehicle designed to take over enemy ships. With only five crewmembers, it can ferry up to 30 stormtroopers, or 10 elite Imperial Zero-G stormtroopers — highly trained assault and boarding units of the Imperial Navy.

Stormtrooper Transports feature very strong shielding, particularly in the front of the craft. It also carries a variety of weapons. Using a universal docking mechanism, it can attach itself to most ships, or it can bore its own hole in the hulls of most enemy vessels.

Name/Model#	Delta Class Dx-9
Designer/Manufacturer:	Telgorn Corporation
Combat Designation:	Assault Fighter/Gunboat
Length:	20 meters
Crew:	5
Weapons:	Eight Taim & Bak KT4 Laser Cannons Four AirMek SW-2 Ion Cannons Two Krupx MG7 Proton Torpedo Launchers (5 torpedoes each)
Shields/Armor:	Forward/Rear Projecting Novaldex Shields (rated at 125 SBD) Quadanium Steel armored titanium hull (rated at 80 RU)

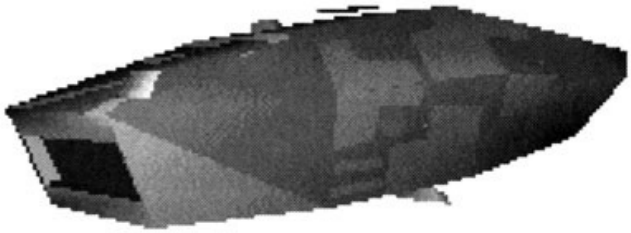
Assault Transport

Assault Transports are larger and better armed versions of the Stormtrooper Transport. They are used for capturing, boarding, or destroying enemy ships. With heavier shielding and hull strength, in addition to three turbolaser batteries, the Assault Transport is a formidable weapon in the fight for peace and security in the galaxy.

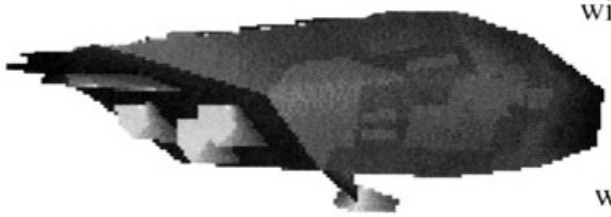


Name/Model#	ATR Assault Transport
Designer/Manufacturer:	KonGar Ship Works
Designation:	Heavy Assault Transport
Length:	45 meters
Crew:	15
Weapons:	Four Taim & Bak H6 Turbolasers Two ArMek SW-3 Ion Cannons Two Krupx MG7 Proton Torpedo Launchers (4 torpedoes each)

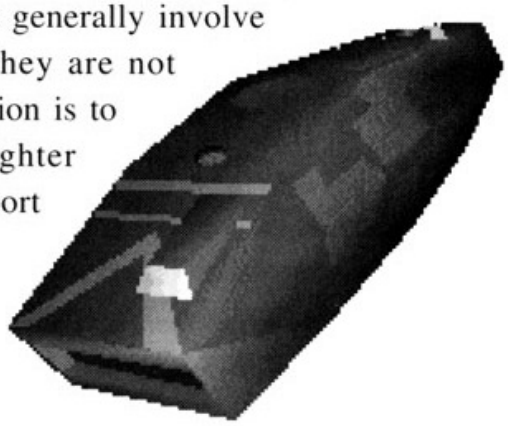
Escort Carrier



The lack of hyperspace capability common to the TIE fighter line has proved an occasional embarrassment to the Empire. This was extremely evident at the Battle of Ton-Falk in which two Imperial Frigates and a Dreadnaught were lost. Imperial High Command determined that these capital ships might have been saved with adequate TIE support, and passed a commission on to Kuat Drive Yards to design and build a TIE carrier. The KDY Escort Carrier is the result.

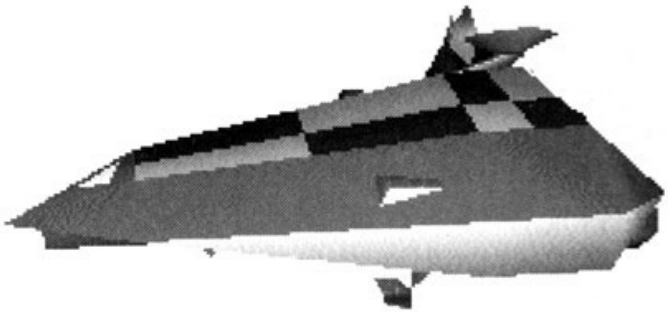


Each Escort Carrier carries an entire TIE wing, with at least one squadron of TIE Interceptors. Extra capacity is often used to carry transports in addition to the TIE fighters. Escort Carriers do not generally involve themselves directly in combat. Though armed, they are not considered offensive weapons and their whole function is to serve the battle from a distance by delivering fighter support. In addition to the hangar wings, each Escort Carrier also has limited field repair facilities.



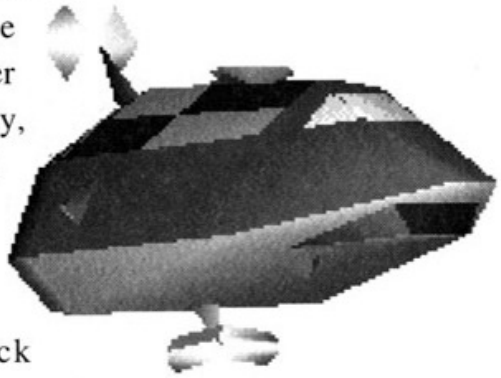
Name/Model#	KDY Escort Carrier
Designer/Manufacturer:	Kuat Drive Yards
Designation:	Heavy starfighter/shuttle carrier
Length:	500 meters
Crew:	3505
Weapons:	10 Taim & Bak H8 Dual Laser Cannons One Krupx VL-6 Warhead Launch System

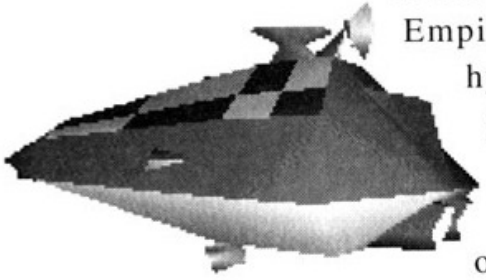
IPV-1 Patrol Craft





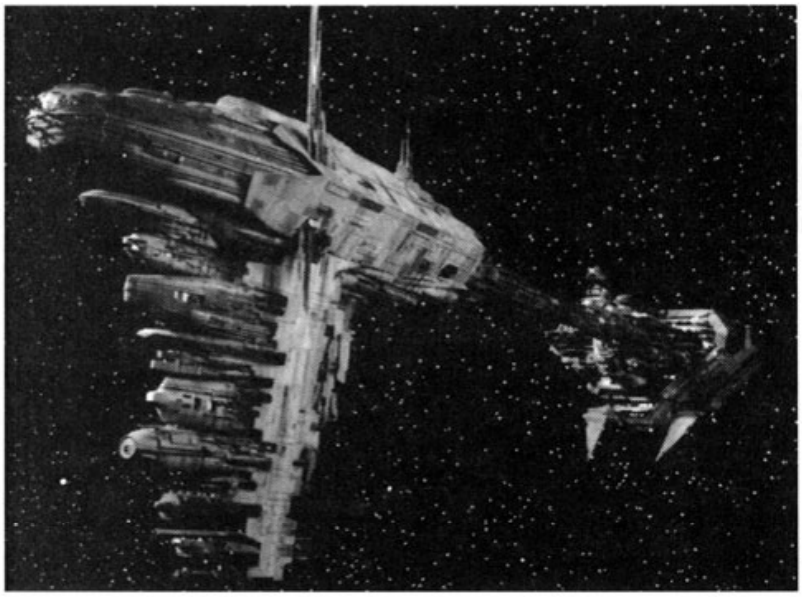
Although our fleet is mighty beyond compare, even our Star Destroyers cannot be everywhere. Smuggling and other illegal activities continue to plague Imperial order and stability. Our first line of defense is the system patrol craft, a typical example of which is the IPV-1 from Sienar Fleet Systems. The IPV-1, like other system patrol craft, relies on speed and maneuverability, along with a sufficiently powerful arsenal, to apprehend and, if necessary, disable or destroy criminal vessels. Patrol craft are also the first line of defense against any incursions by enemies of the Empire. Because they lack hyperspace capabilities, system patrol craft spend most of their time flying specific routes through their assigned areas, watching known pirate and smuggling routes. "Constant vigilance" is the watchword of the patrol craft crew.





Name/Model#	IPV-1 System Patrol Craft
Designer/Manufacturer:	Sienar Fleet Systems
Designation:	Inter-system patrol/customs craft
Length:	150 meters
Crew:	12
Weapons:	4 Taim & Bak XV7 Turbolasers (computer assisted targeting) 1 Krupx VL-4a Warhead Launch System

Nebulon B Escort Frigate



Although the Nebulon B still sees service as an Imperial convoy escort craft, reports have been reaching military HQ regarding its increasing use with the Rebel dogs. It is not clear where the rabble are obtaining such powerful ships, but the reports are too numerous to doubt. We have, therefore, included the Nebulon B among the Rebel ships, even though it is still technically one of ours.

The addition of the Nebulon B frigate to the side of the enemy represents a disturbing trend. This is a powerful ship. Certainly not a Star Destroyer, but still a capital ship of immense capability. In the service of the Empire, it holds a complement of two squadrons of TIE fighters (24 in all). With its powerful turbolasers and other weapons and shields, this is a formidable escort vehicle that has made the enemy think twice about attacking our convoys.

However, in enemy hands, this represents a dangerous opponent, as there are few ships outside of the Star Destroyers and the older *Victory*-class destroyers, that out-gun the Nebulon B. With a squadron or two of X-wing fighters, this can become the platform for dangerous Rebel missions. We recommend that all efforts be taken to search out and destroy any Nebulon B frigates that have found their way into enemy hands, and further, that stringent means be undertaken to tighten security and to prevent more of these ships from being used against us.

Name/Model#	EF76-B
Designer/Manufacturer:	KDY
Combat Designation:	Escort Starship
Length:	300 meters
Crew:	920 (77 officers, 843 enlisted)
Weapons:	12 Taim & Bak XI 7 Turbolasers (computer assisted targeting) 12 Borstel RH8 Laser Cannons Two Phylon-Q7 Tractor Beam Projectors
Starfighter Squadrons:	One X-wing or A-wing plus one Y-wing

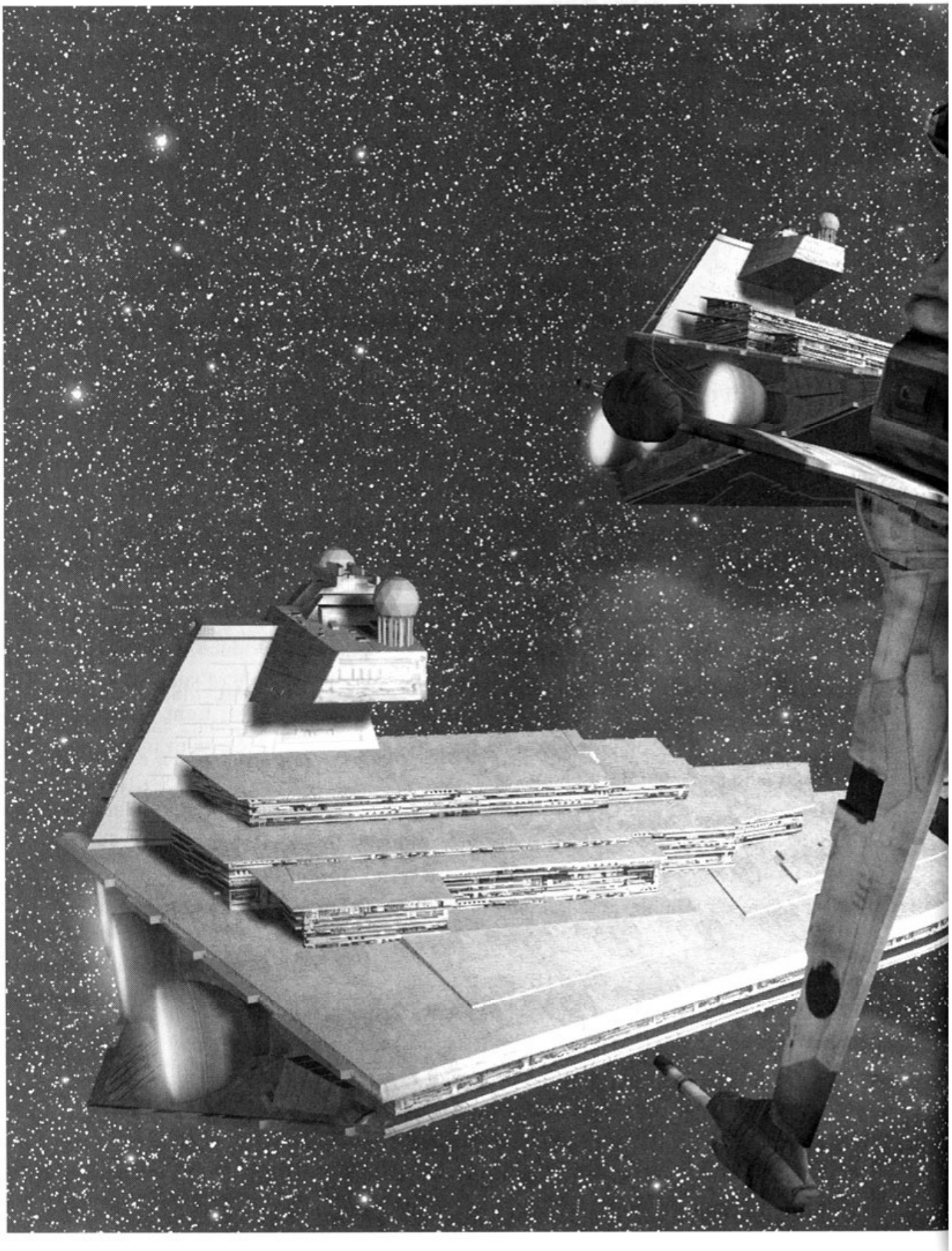
Corellian Corvette (Blockade Runner)

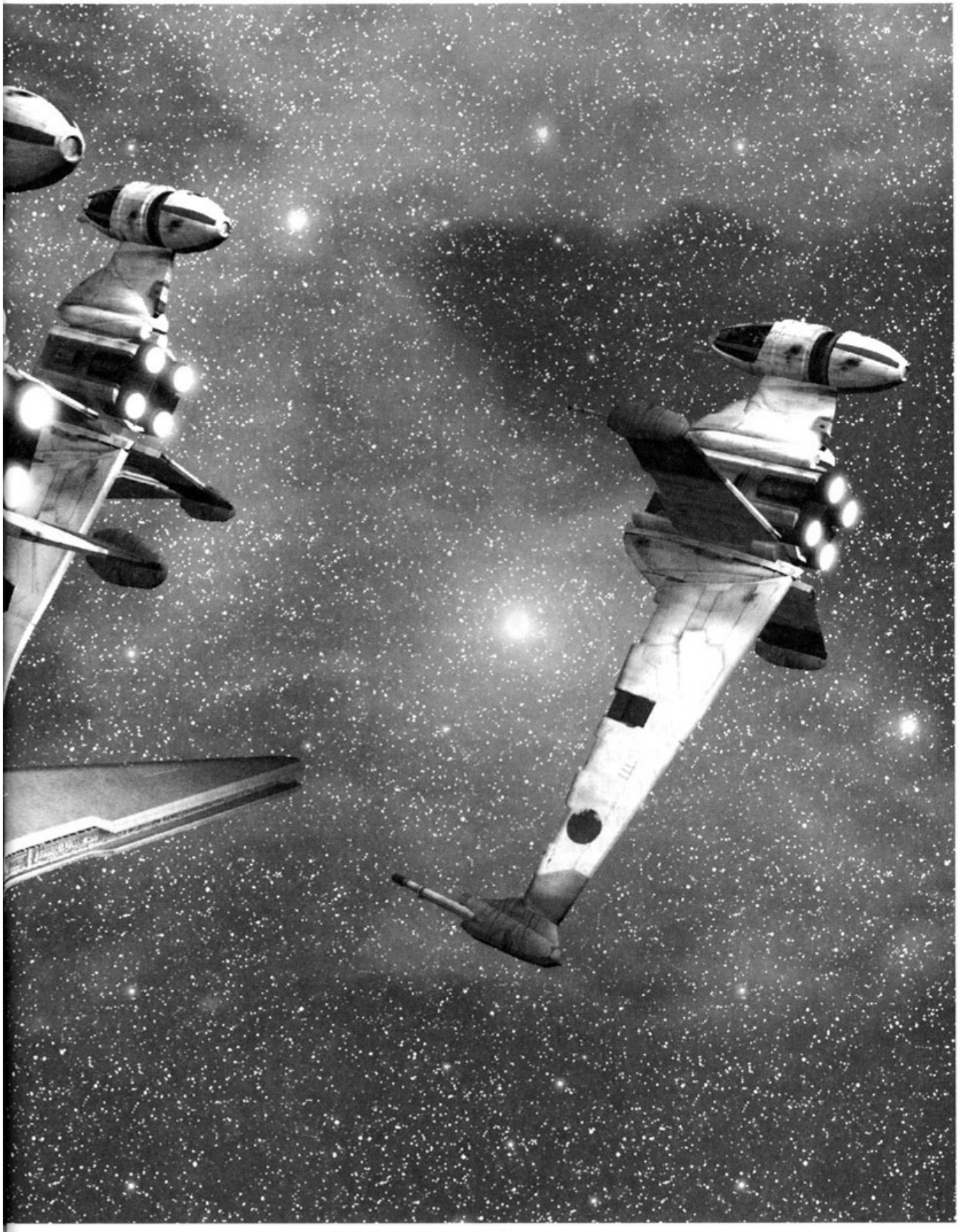


The Corellian Engineering Corporation builds multi-purpose ships of all kinds. While most shipyards are building specialized spacecraft, Corellians still produce models that cover a wide range of purposes. The Corellian Corvette is a good example of such versatility. This mid-range vessel can function equally well as a troop transport, light escort, cargo or passenger carrier. Although the Corvette may be unable to compete with more specialized vehicles, it is to be found throughout the galaxy.

Many older Corellian Corvettes find their way into the hands of smugglers and other criminals, and not a few of them have been enlisted by the Rebel traitors. Because the Corellians like very fast sublight ships with quick turnaround into hyperspace, these vehicles can prove troublesome to many of our Imperial picket lines and patrol ships.

Name/Model#	CR90 Blockade Runner
Designer/Manufacturer:	Corellian Engineering Corporation
Combat Designation:	Multi-purpose starship and transport vessel
Length:	150 meters
Crew:	46 (8 officers, 38 enlisted)
Weapons:	Six Taim & Bak H9 Dual Turbolasers





Star Destroyers

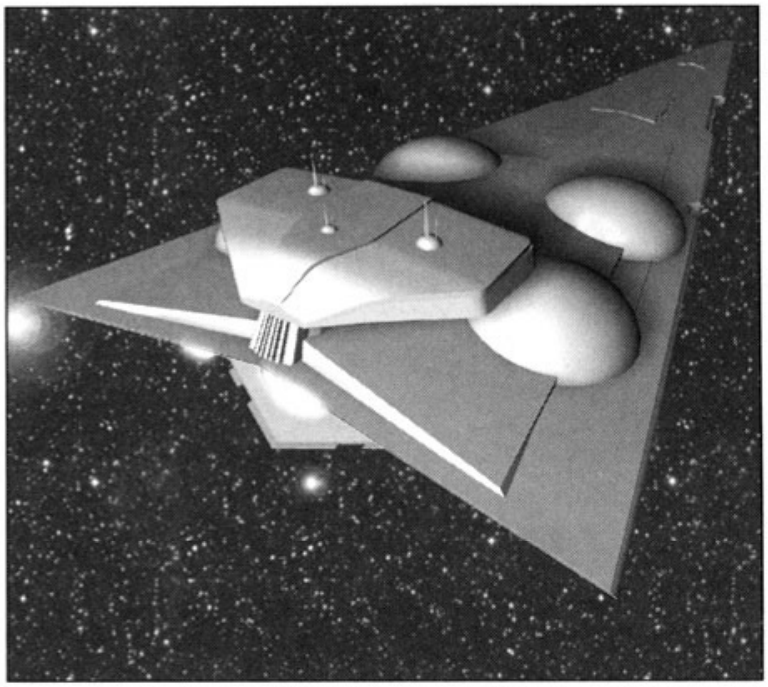
We look back to the various budgetary arguments with a certain sense of amusement. We remember when the bureaucrats of the former government fought so hard against the *Imperial*-class project. Their arguments about costs and feasibility studies and the like ring hollow in the face of the reality of a single Star Destroyer.

Although the *Victory*-class Star Destroyer was powerful and deadly, the *Imperial*-class Star Destroyer is truly an awesome achievement. Capable of reducing whole civilizations to ruin, it carries a full complement of AT-AT and AT-ST walkers along with assault craft, a full stormtrooper division, and many squadrons of TIE fighters. Its 60 Turbolaser and 60 Ion Cannon batteries make it the most formidable weapons platform currently operating in galactic space.

Imperial-class Star Destroyers are expensive to produce, but their value in maintaining order and control throughout the inhabited worlds is immense. Their planetary assault capabilities are sufficient to subdue most underdeveloped worlds without additional support. Larger, more advanced civilizations may require several Star Destroyers working together. And in open space, nothing can truly challenge the Star Destroyer, though the ugly Calamarian monstrosity, the MC80, can cause trouble for a Star Destroyer, and two such ships could perhaps defeat it.

Name/Model#	*Imperial*-1 Class
Designer/Manufacturer:	KDY
Combat Designation:	Capital Starship
Length:	1600 meters
Crew:	37,085 (4,520 officers; 32,565 enlisted)
Power System:	SFS I-a2b solar ionization reactor
Weapons:	60 Taim & Bak XX-9 Heavy Turbolasers (computer assisted targeting) 60 Borstel NK-7 Ion Cannons (computer assisted targeting) 10 Phylon Q7 Tractor Beam Projectors
Starfighter Squadrons:	Three TIE Starfighter squadrons Two TIE Interceptor squadrons One TIE Bomber squadron
Planetary Assault Troops:	Full Standard Stormtrooper division 12 Landing Barges 20 AT-AT Walkers 30 AT-ST Walkers
Other Onboard Craft:	Eight *Lambda* -class Imperial Shuttles 15 Stormtrooper Transports 5 Assault Gunboats

Interdictor Cruiser



Our esteemed engineers have come up with yet another way to defeat the Rebel Alliance fools who boast of the hyperspace capabilities of their starfighters. With the development of the gravity well projector, we were just a single step away from creating a new weapon in the fight against the rabble.

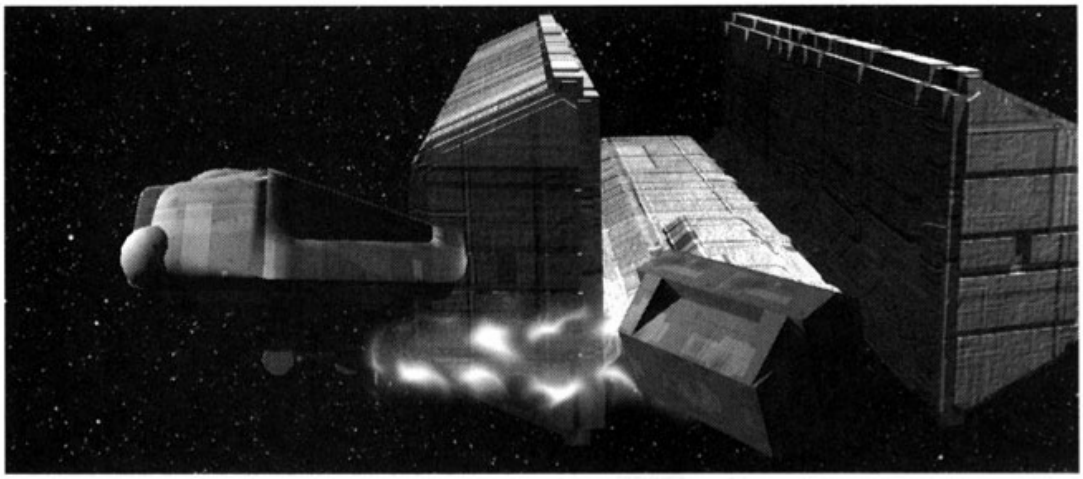
Using the gravity well technology, Sienar Fleet Systems had created the Interdictor Cruiser whose primary purpose is to set up an artificial gravity well in battle zones and high security areas. The gravity well serves two purposes.

First, it appears as a large gravitational body to any hyperdrive system. This prevents a ship from jumping into the vicinity of the gravity well. The Interdictor Cruiser is designed to be placed near engagement areas or areas of potential conflict. It will stay outside the battle zones and set up the gravity well as required by circumstances.

Second, any ships already in hyperspace that pass within the gravity well's field will be drawn immediately into realspace. Thus, the Interdictor Cruiser can help set up ambush zones by locating in known hyperspace corridors, forcing Rebel craft to reenter realspace where our battle fleets can destroy them.

Name/Model#	Interdictor Im-418
Designer/Manufacturer:	Sienar Fleet Systems
Combat Designation:	Heavy Cruiser/Immobilizer
Length:	600 meters
Crew:	2,807 (427 officers, 2,380 enlisted)
Weapons:	20 Taim & Bak GX-7 Laser Cannons (computer assisted firing) Four SFS G7-x Gravity Well Projectors
Starfighter Squadrons:	1 TIE Fighter squadron (or) 1 TIE Interceptor squadron
Other Onboard Craft:	1 Lambda Class Imperial Shuttle 3 Stormtrooper Transports

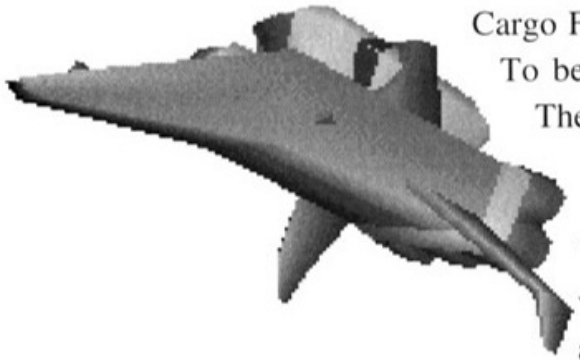
Freighters, Containers, and Tugs



Bulk Freighters are the mainstay of galactic commerce. These huge spacecraft contain powerful, but slow, hyperspace and sublight engines (although many captains have refitted their engines for greater speed). A cargo vehicle of this size and capacity is simply not expected to outclass other vehicles, particularly not those of the Imperial Navy.

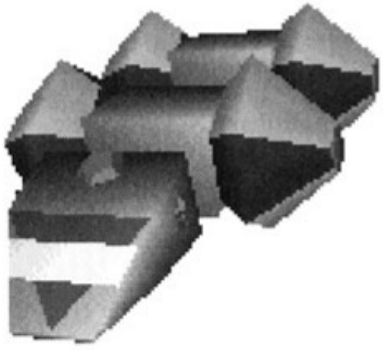
Bulk Freighters are tough, reliable spacecraft. Though they generally lack luxury and a lot of state-of-the-art components and weapons, they serve their purpose well, and often travel in convoys with more military ships to protect their cargo.

Cargo Ferry

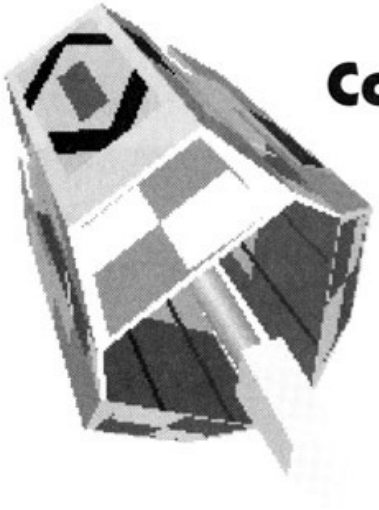


Cargo Ferries are more versatile than standard bulk freighters. To begin with, they carry a complement of laser cannons. They are also set up to carry various space containers and even other spacecraft for transport purposes. Cargo Ferries are often used by pirates to hijack spacecraft. The Empire often uses Cargo Ferries to impound vessels found to be trafficking in illegal goods or aiding and abetting our enemies.

Modular Conveyor

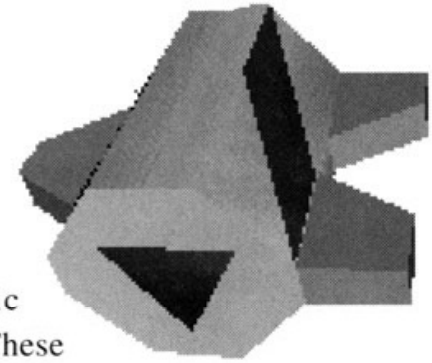


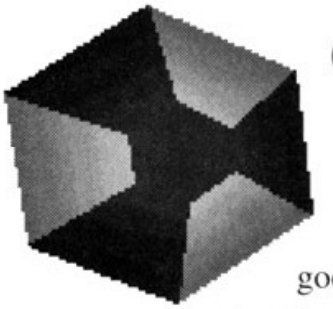
The Modular Conveyor is an armed freighter that pulls specialized linked cargo modules behind it. Although it carries a complement of laser cannons, the cargo modules themselves remain somewhat more vulnerable.



Container Transport

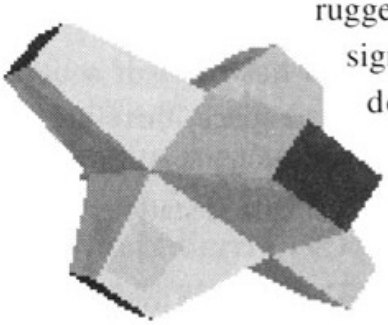
The Container Transport is perhaps the largest of the freighters. It can carry up to three of the largest space containers. Container Transports are armed with laser cannons for self-protection.

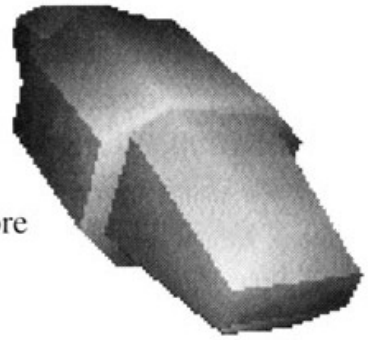




Space Containers

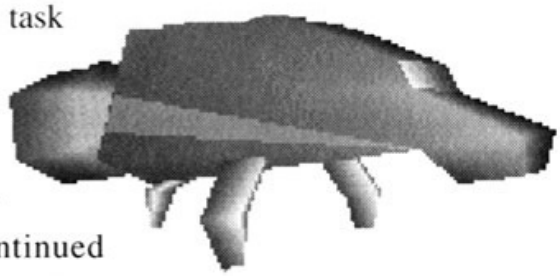
Space Containers are the basic modules of galactic commerce. These huge containers are packed with important goods and then loaded onto various freighter models for transport to other systems. Space Containers are simple boxes, durable and rugged, and have no engines or other significant systems, other than those designed for special storage conditions. Space containers come in many shapes and sizes, generally made to fit one or more freighter types.



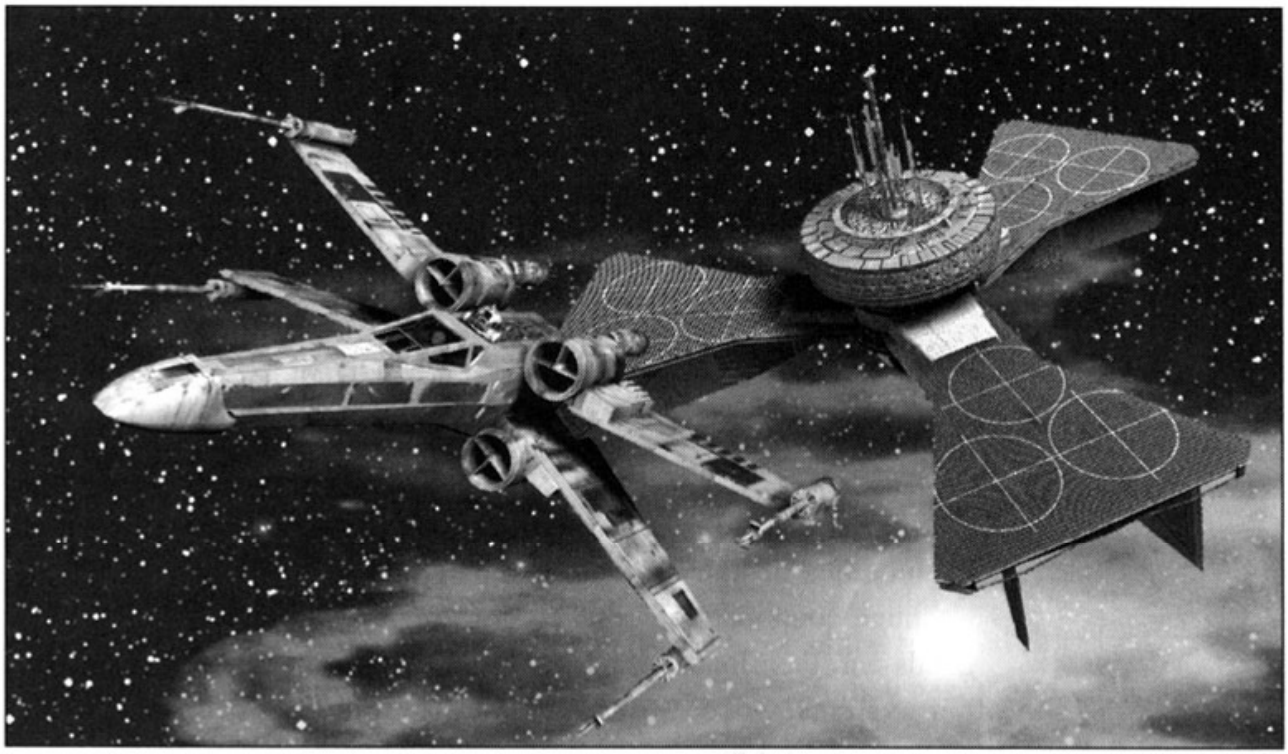


Space Tugs and Heavy Lifters

Space Tugs are small utility vehicles whose sole task is to move Space Containers from one location to another. Though small, Space Tugs contain very powerful (but slow) engines and tractor beams. Heavy lifters are sometimes used for military purposes. They are critical to the continued movement of materiel throughout the Empire.



Space Installations



Although our planetary resources are vast, the Empire often has need of a base of operations in otherwise uninhabited space. Even within inhabited space, there are times when operations are more smoothly carried out away from the gravity well of a planet. Like the Empire, the Rebels have also found the usefulness of specialized stations in space, which we routinely destroy as often as possible.

Space installations, sometimes referred to as space platforms, are used for a variety of functions:

a) Custom check points

b) Imperial military outposts

c) Armories

d) Starfighter bases

e) Repair facilities

f) Cargo and freight holding areas

g) Scientific and commercial ventures and operations

Military installations usually carry a contingent of two starfighter squadrons in three hangar bays. Armaments vary, but the usual complement features six laser cannon batteries and from three to ten turbolaser batteries.

Epilogue

Maarek watched the admiral step off his personal shuttle and begin to walk toward the hangar exit. He stepped slowly, apparently deep in thought. After a moment he stopped and looked around. His eyes scanned the room, fixed on Maarek and, for an instant there was no recognition, but that quickly passed.

"Stele!" he called.

"Sir?" the young pilot answered walking up to Admiral Mordon and offering a formal salute — right hand to left breast.

The admiral waved off the salute and smiled. "You've had a taste of the pilot's life. Does it suit you?"

"Sir! I believe it does, sir!"

Mordon laughed. "You've become quite the proper pilot, Stele. But can you still think for yourself? Let me tell you, this galaxy is unkind to those who do not keep their wits about them, and I fear we will see things turned inside out before long."

Of course Maarek had no idea what the admiral was talking about.

"How so?" he asked.

"Ah, young Stele. I smell treachery and deceit. I've survived long in this job because I sense such things. Just as I sense loyalty and dedication and promise. Take my word for it. Not all is as it seems." The admiral seemed to be in a talkative mood, though to Maarek's ear it sounded a little like the musings of a man with something else on his mind. But the admiral wasn't finished yet. "Distinguish yourself in your missions, and you, too, will come to see the pattern of events. Pay attention to all around you and perhaps . . . just perhaps you may command a starship yourself some day."

"Yessir," Maarek answered. "But what must I do in the meantime?"

"A good question, pilot. Survive. Destroy the enemy. Follow orders. Fly your tours, win your citations, and keep your eyes and ears open and your mouth shut. Most of all, stay alive. That's critical." This struck the admiral as exceptionally funny for some reason and he burst out laughing. "Stele, I find you amusing. Come see me any time. My door is always open. Use this password with the orderly. Say, *There's a fog over Celadon City*, and he'll let you in. Goodbye for now, Stele."

The admiral turned to walk away, and Maarek heard him still chuckling as he left. Maarek resumed his duties and tried not to think about Mordon.

For further adventures of Maarek Stele, and complete winning strategies for TIE Fighter, look for *TIE Fighter: The Official Strategy Guide* from Prima Publishing.

Credits

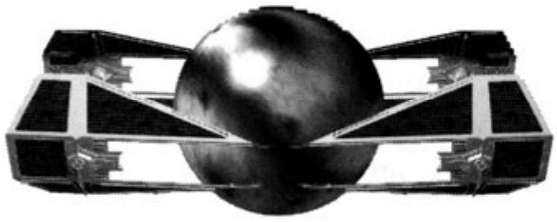
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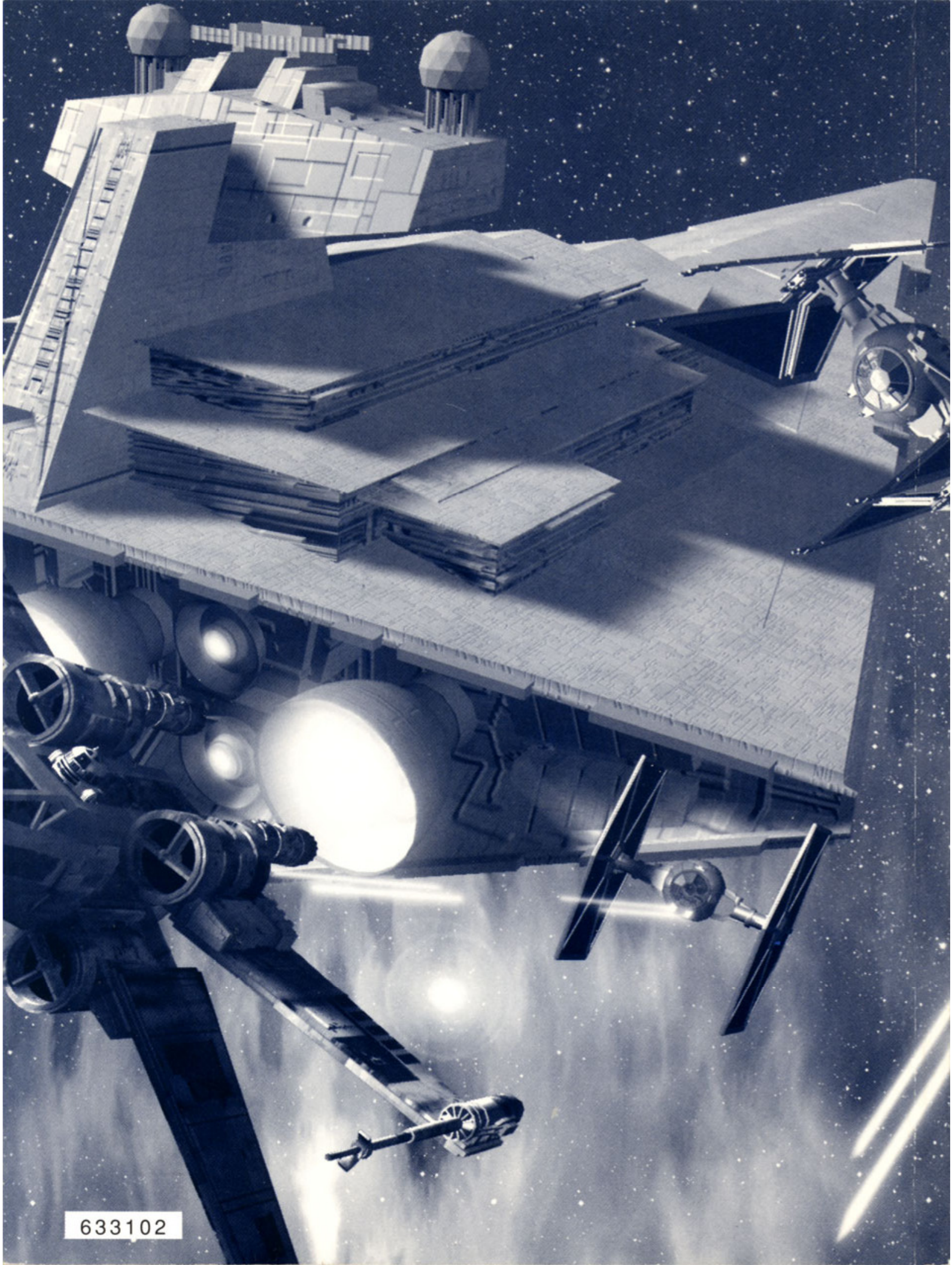
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